THE DYNAMICS OF CHANGE BY BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS: A MODEL FOR CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

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This project sought to build relationships between parishioners that led to positive change within the church congregation, through a series of sessions designed to strengthen communication and establish unity. This study employed an ethnographic method to describe the relationship-building experiences, which were achieved by parishioners sharing information about their lives and ministries and learning from one another. As a result of new relationships formed, those new to the church engaged in more dialogue and interaction with the established members. While some relationships are still problematic, generally speaking, the positive interaction between parishioners has enhanced the quality Christian fellowship.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. James Alfred Smith, Sr., for supporting my ministry for more than twenty-four years. Dr. Smith is a professor of Preaching and Ministry at the American Baptist Seminary of the West, Graduate Theological Union, in Berkeley, California. He has pushed me to complete this much-needed research and to build a community model for African-American pastors in urban settings.

I am thankful to a number of people who invested time and energy in helping me make this dissertation a reality. Thanks go to Reverend Dr. Howard Anderson and his contextual associates---Verna Malls, Annie Perry, Joe McIntyre, Eddie McCloud, Socio Woodbridge, Mary Kittrell, Sally Williams, and Eddie Williams---for pushing me to accurately complete the fieldwork. Special thanks also go to the Mount Calvary Baptist Church who valued the entire process of learning to interact more meaningfully with one another.

I am also thankful to the affinity members of the Urban Development and Intercultural Communication peer group of the United Theological Seminary, in Dayton, Ohio, as well as its professors Dr. Robert Walker, Dr. Linda E. Thomas, Dr. Howard Anderson and Dr. Andrew Sung Park. I am also indebted to Donna L. Ferrier for editing this dissertation.

I am also grateful to the project facilitator, Andrea Sheppard, a congregational development specialist with the Catholic Diocese of Boston, Massachusetts. Finally, I would like to thank the staff, faculty, and administration of the doctoral ministry program at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, for their support.

DEDICATION

To my parents:

Johnny Myles Wilson, Sr., and Nathalie Callahan Wilson

For their tireless support!

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ABBREVIATIONS

KJV	King James Version
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NIRV	New International Revised Version
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
TEV	Today's English Version
II Sam.	II Samuel
Col.	Colossians
Cor.	Corinthians
Deut.	Deuteronomy
Eph.	Ephesians
Gen.	Genesis
Hos.	Hosea
Isa.	Isaiah
Jer.	Jeremiah
Jn.	John
Lk.	Luke
Matt.	Matthew
Neh.	Nehemiah
Phil.	Philippians

Philem.	Philemon
Prov.	Proverbs
Ps.	Psalms
Rom.	Romans
Zep.	Zephaniah
cont.	continued
e.g.	for example

INTRODUCTION

In September 2004, the researcher completed a three-day retreat at Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland, California. The men's retreat has been a Men's Ministry for more than twenty-five years. Topics ranged from men's health, relationships, and fellowship. After spending time at Redwood Forest in North California and returning to New England, the researcher returned home, depressed for several days. As the researcher began to ask the question, "How can a revival begin at Mount Calvary?" God responded, "Reverend, you have to be patient."

At Mount Calvary, the pastor is always the last person to leave the sanctuary not only on Sunday, but during the week as well. People continually cry to be actively involved in their church and in the community.

Change is a complex problem at Mount Calvary. We are facing changes not only in our congregations, but also in our families, our work places, our schools, and the list goes on. It is imperative that congregations continue to change, meaning to become more friendly and get involved more in the lives of the congregation. Change is a time of risk, resistance, and conflict, issues that the researcher will address from a congregational model on building relationships in the faith community.

This project is the result of the challenges the researcher has faced in a city where people continue to struggle as the small family churches and who remain silent on developing leaders for the future. Building community among church members is a key element for the future success of any congregation. It is the leader's challenge to learn

from past successes and failures to advance positive change by fostering relationships in every aspect of ministry and support.

The Dynamics of Change by Building Relationships: A Model for Congregational Development consists of three phases. Phase one is congregational development, which contains the purpose of the project. Phase two is the relationship-building phase, and phase three deals with house meetings and issue assembly. This dissertation consists of six chapters. Chapter one describes the researcher's life, ministry, and synergy perspective. Chapter two provides a literature review and information pertinent to congregational development. Chapter three describes biblical, theological, and historical foundations. Chapter four deals with methodology and data collection, and Chapter five contains the results of the data analysis. Finally, in Chapter six, the researcher summarizes and concludes the project.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

One of the most complicated parts of church life is working in a diversified community where differences, opinions, communication, and change create tension. The lack of meaningful dialogue creates unfair treatment of church constituents. The lack of trust without some healthy form of communication creates suspicion about how the church does business and meets the needs of its constituents. And finally, positive relationships among church leaders are crucial for creating and maintaining an atmosphere of unity and productivity in order for the church to be an agent of change.

In this global society, change is for the good of the people and blessed with God's grace and mercy. Life keeps moving, and change is an active process, even if it is painful. In our society where corporate America continues to find ways to improve, modify, or provide services, our citizens are constantly challenged to experiment with new commodities. Change is costly, and sometimes the most helpful items are also the most expensive. An appliance that worked well in the 1980s may be upgraded with new technology, which may add purchasing cost to the new high-tech model, but in the end it reduces a person's water or electric bill. Similarly, change within the church provides an opportunity to explore different areas of dialogue and new ways of building relationships and reduce distrust.

Without any constructive method of developing relationships, prospective leaders would not know how to foster trust and continuity among their congregations. Silent

mistrust among clergy and lay leadership keeps everyone in the dark about how to promote change and improve relationships among parishioners.

Change and relationships, however, are vital to the success of any organization. The lack of a shared vision can lead to organizational disunity and unstable leadership. Moreover, the church must develop leaders for the present and the future. We cannot simply disregard a new method of fostering communication and building relationships because "We've never done it that way before." The researcher believes that failure to develop church leaders and congregational relationships, as well as a lack of dialogue and meaningful discussion within the church organization, hinders the entire church from acting on the Great Commission.

Throughout the researcher's upbringing in the 1960s and 1970s, both parents developed his mind, spirit, and heart to believe in himself during a time of racism, segregation, and bigotry. Being a southerner gave him a sense of respect for what is right and wrong. Through continual struggles and challenges, the researcher learned the value of love, dignity, and appreciation of every human being. The attributes of struggle, love and dignity created the opportunity to build positive relationships and served as a spoke person against the injustice of racism and bigotry. Also, it empowered me to develop leadership skill toward being sensitive supporting families in distress.

The researcher's college education at the Southern University at Baton Rouge was interrupted by a student demonstration as a result of the Vietnam War. Leonard D. Brown and Denver Smith were killed at the university in November 1972. As a result, the campus was closed for one semester to "regroup" from the unrest until the fall of 1973. At that time, the researcher transferred to the University of Louisiana, Monroe (formally

the Northeast Louisiana University of Monroe). Throughout the researcher's second year of college, he focused on working for change: to grant equal and civil rights to all students on campus. In the early 1970s, black pride became synonymous with the need for positive change for African American students.

During the spring semester of 1974, the student government invited the researcher to introduce the speaker for an annual student government event, who was the late Reverend Ralph Abernathy. In 1975, Reverend Abernathy was the President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. This experience pushed the researcher even further to develop positive relationships and facilitate change for those who needed it in their lives.

After college, the researcher's life was guided by faith and a new family. In 1976 he married his college sweetheart, Levonne, and their first child, Candice, was born in 1978. The new family resided in Alexandria, Louisiana, still young at heart, thinking they knew how to navigate the society and the world. The researcher and spouse left Louisiana in 1978 for the Pacific Northwest looking for "milk and honey." This was an opportunity for two young people to experience new and exciting opportunities for work and education. Their second child, Robert, was born in 1980 in Seattle, Washington.

The researcher was accepted into the Master's of Divinity program at the American Baptist Seminary of the West, in Berkeley, California. Dr. James Alfred Smith mentored and coached him into the pastoral ministry.

Shortly after seminary, the researcher relocated to San Diego for active military service. The idea of serving God and country were deeply rooted in his soul and spirit. While growing up the researcher was under guild by his Father's military career as a

retired Colonel and served as a deacon in the local church. The influence of his home development encouraged the development of building relationship and as a Christian leader.

Several years later, he returned to pastoral ministry at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Springfield, Massachusetts. Mount Calvary is located north of the city's major business district. Numerous financial, medical, and service industry businesses serve the Springfield, Massachusetts, area. The church is located near several colleges and universities: Springfield College, American International College, and Western New England College.

The community and the surrounding area of Mount Calvary Baptist church is known as the "north end," which has a reputation of low-income housing and economic decline. The church has a unique problem in that it is in the poor and high-crime district of the city. In spite the economic conditions in the north end of the city Mount Calvary is a faithful congregation with a desire to re-establish itself as a progressive church in the community.

Mount Calvary grew out of a strong African American congregation in the 1960s and 1970s with the support of African American scholars from institutions like the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Andover Newton Theological Seminary near Boston. Mount Calvary's mission statement is grounded in the traditions of the past:

> This church declares its adherence to the teachings of Christ as set forth in the New Testament and to the general principles of the Baptist denomination. To maintain the public worship of God, to study and practice right living as revealed and taught in the sacred scriptures, to win individuals at home and abroad to allegiance to Jesus Christ, and to advance his cause and Kingdom in all the earth (Mount Calvary Baptist Church Mission Statement).

These traditions are basic to the celebrative days of the church and provide joyous activities for the older members of the congregation. Traditions carried over from the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s are very much connected to the life of the church. Different church groups have special celebrative days, such as Children's Day, Women's Day, and Men's Day. The church also celebrates its anniversary once each year and has special services that correlate with its special days.

The church covenant is basic to the mission of the church. It's basically a verbal contract, built on traditional African American Baptist principles and reads as follows:

> Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our savior; and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ. We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to give it a place in our affections, prayers, and services above every organization of human origin; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrine; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God has prospered us, toward its expenses, for the support of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. In case of difference of opinion in the church, we will strive to avoid a contentious spirit, and if we cannot unanimously agree, we will cheerfully recognize the right of the majority to govern. We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to study diligently the word of God; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintance; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be kind and just to those in our employ, and faithful in the service we promise others; endeavoring in the purity of heart and good will toward all men to exemplify and commend our holy faith. We further engage to watch over, to pray for, to exhort and stir up each other unto every good world and work; to guard each other's reputation, not needlessly exposing the infirmities of others; to participate in each other's joy, and with tender sympathy bear one another's burdens and sorrows; to cultivate Christian courtesy; to be slow go give or take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, being mindful of the rules of the Savior in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, to secure it without delay; and through life, amid called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. When we remove from this place, we engage as soon as possible to unite with some other

church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's world.[1]

The Heart of the Church

The heart of the spiritual community at Mount Calvary is the solidarity among people of faith. The bonds between members are not formal or structured, but are free-flowing, and other expressions of agape love. The real flesh and blood manifestations of ekklesia, however, are found in the tension with the institutional tendencies of the church. As Brunner puts it:

> The brotherhood can have laws and institutions but it can never regard these as belonging to its essence. But, above all, it can never understand itself as an institution…And this non-institutional character is much more evident still in the Ekklesia of the New Testament whose life-element is the Holy Spirit.[2]

Mount Calvary teaches and derives its basic theological purpose from the King James Version of the Bible. The word of God is proclaimed and the petitions of the people are offered in worship. The Bible is the authoritative document for basic instruction and for spiritual enrichment and insight. In spite of any internal struggles the church has, its people are encouraged by the preached word and the celebration of how God has provided purpose and direction for the congregation.

The church also exists to call all people to experience newness of life in Christ. The worship service is the high point of activity of church life, which enables its members to appreciate scripture more fully. The pastor-preacher has the responsibility to

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[1] *The New National Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: Triad Publication, 2001), 4.

[2] James H. Evans, *We Have Been Believers* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 127.

connect the preaching hour to the present-day context and bring hope to a community of faith. The vital question for the research is how does this aspect of the church's life build healthy relationships and promote unity? When the core leaders are open to a practical critical thinking on receiving a realistic view on how well groups work together or a picture of itself as a Church body, genuine unity can be realized.

Theology and Spiritual Practice

The operative beliefs of the congregation are based on the power of the written word. Church members possess a definite belief in God and an obligation to articulate, interpret, and access the doctrinal affirmations of the church. They also realize they have a responsibility for caring for the community of faith. For members of Mount Calvary, preaching is the center and the focus of Sunday worship. The biblical teachings provide a hopeful response to the present-day concerns of our society. The Mount Calvary Baptist Church has a Joint Board, which is comprised of the Board of Trustees and Deacons. On a rotational basis, the board elects trustees each year who are responsible for improving the church property, handling funds, and approving major purchases and transactions according to the bylaws of the church.

The church has several auxiliaries that operate as separate, but connected, entities. The Deacon Board, for example, has the freedom to act and develop their own programs and policies. These boards plan the traditional activities of the church each year, the finances of which are overseen by the Board of Trustees. The deacons are

responsible for visiting the sick, serving communion, and providing special support to the widows of the congregation. So, they are basically limited to the older church members.

Celebrative African American worship is in great demand at Mount Calvary. The joy of worship is an ecstatic expression of reverence to God. It is the empowering and redemptive work of hope in the congregation. The music, the prayers, and the delivery of sermons are the main elements that drive the survival of folks that are hungry for spiritual guidance and nurturing. Like Moses, Miriam, and the Israelites, African American folks at Mount Calvary celebrate their suffering, pain, racism, and injustice as something God has brought us through. Mount Calvary is a striving church with the excitement of worship on Sundays, and provides the opportunity for spiritual nurture from week to week.

Statement of the Problem

For the past fifteen years, clerical stability has been a problem. From the 1970s through the 1990s, pastors' relationships with their lay leaders in the church have suffered. Lay leadership is visualized through Deacon Board, rather than the congregation or different ministry groups. Throughout the tenure of the researcher's pastoral ministry, any suggestions or ideas for church growth and development have been met with resistance. The more the researcher began addressing the need for and the real possibility of change, the more negative and angry some of the laypeople in the congregation seemed to become. Throughout the history of the church, the Lord has provided many pastors gifted to preach, teach, and direct spiritual activities.

The hypothesis for this project is that health working relationships are essential to congregational development and to instituting the same church programs each year. The objective is to develop a model for active dialogue, reflection, and interaction between members of the lay leadership and to let the congregation know that change is healthy and working relationships are vital to the success of any group. The role of the pastor is to observe the effectiveness on group interaction and how the appropriately address the research questions or question. Gathering information as a direct observer to the critical needs of the congregation.

The researcher's philosophy of pastoral leadership is to teach others the importance of taking responsibility for different ministry aspects of the church, including administration, finance, new membership development, evangelism, missions, and stewardship. As pastor, I am an "outsider looking in" and attempting to enhance people's achievements. The problem is that I have become a micro manager in the daily activities of the organization due to a lack of involvement because of the congregation's unwillingness to change. They like the way the church has operated in the past, and because of a lack of firm relationships among the congregational members, fresh ideas for growth are stifled within the church. The researcher is, therefore, attempting to build strong relationships among lay folks in the congregation. The lack of communication and genuine relationships limit the church's ability to become more effective in all areas of ministry and community.

Relationships are vital to any organization and to the development of church members. People are dependent upon relationships that bring change and hopeful

outcomes. If the congregation or lay leaders are to survive and experience freedom in the local church, lay leaders and members must build relationships among one another.

The account of raising Lazarus from the dead is a biblical example of life and transformation. John 11:38-44 reminds us:

> Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God? Therefore, they took away the stone. In addition, Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go" (Jn. 11:38-44 NRSV).

The heart of the church is its connectedness to people discovering each other's strengths and leading each other in dialogue. Without the commitment of building meaningful relationships, communication will cease and the needs of the people will never be addressed. Even with the best intentions of worship and prayer, if leaders lack the spiritual fabric to interact with folks, the local church will suffer from a lack of change and transformation.

In 2 Cor. 5:16-19 NKJV, Paul addresses the church on the importance of newness in Christ:

> Where henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know us him no more. Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. In addition, all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto him, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:16-19 NKJV).

How can leaders of the church be motivated to become involved in the community? Is the ministry of reconciliation a challenge? Is change possible for traditional congregations? Reflecting on the Prophet Ezekiel, a spiritual and social concern is present. In Judah's society, the lack of motivation and the appreciation of the power of the all-wise and mighty Creator contributed to the nation's fall into Babylonian control. The inability to adapt and navigate the needs of the oppressed became the legacy of this nation. Eze. 11:19 NASB envisioned for the people "a new spirit within them."

The researcher's focus is to build a collective leadership and provide a methodology for hopeful outcomes that bring about sustainable opportunities among church leaders and members. The researcher also contends that building relationships is important and essential for Mount Calvary Baptist Church and its lay leaders. If the local church is to survive and move forward in the future as it has in the past, it must achieve solid working relationships to be able to work together to achieve a common vision.

In Matthew, chapter 4, upon hearing the hopeful words of Jesus, "Follow me, and I will make you fishermen of people," the disciples "immediately" left their comfort zones of life. The fear of change is the fear of being out of control. As churches and congregations look ahead to a time when they may face different styles of worship, music, and leadership, they will fear no longer having control over their ministries. Fear is not always expressed and the opportunity to share is not always possible among leaders and church members, even though these things are vital to the church.

The Problem Statement

The urban family church is complex and requires working relationships with opportunities for positive change within the core group. Do the people of God see themselves involved in the ministry of the church or community? Or is it just the pastor's and the secretary's duty to organize church activities with just a few volunteers? Leadership development has not been a pattern. After three years at Mount Calvary, the researcher discovered during a conversation with some long-time members of the congregation, that the church would rather continue with the status quo of operations than develop new opportunities for growth.

Many family members are leaders on church boards and are responsible for making the decisions that affect the church. Even though family leadership is more widely accepted in the congregation than any other authority, control of specific families over the local congregation is a major concern. While some members find reaching out to others and supporting families a bit strange, developing relationships is a strategic ongoing process, which requires connecting to key family members of the congregation in order to accomplish specific church goals.

Edwin H. Friedman's book, *Family Process and Organization Life,* stresses the complex dual relationships in the family church, and how the family model plays a large role in a congregational family church. He asserts:

> A family business, for example, will mirror in its own system the emotional processes going on in the family that runs it. (This is also true of small-town churches.) Indeed, it is almost impossible to bring change to a troubled family if the various members are also involved with one another in a family business because economic relationships often lock into the personal interdependencies. This may be a major reason why family businesses rarely last more than a few

> generations. But even where there is little or no personal family involvement, work systems that deal with the basic stresses of life, particularly medical or law partnerships, labor unions, psychiatric clinics or hospitals, and to a lesser extend school systems (but especially private schools), all are rules that govern who in the family is likely to became ill. Of all work systems, however, the one that functions most like a family is the church or synagogue.[3]

Change is problematic when it influences the system of flow, or the process of doing the "same things (programs and ministries) over and over." It is not uncommon for church members and leaders to have a sense of disappointment when things don't go the way some folks expects things to go. When reviewing more specific challenges-for example, making major changes in the life of the church, planning or addressing new ideas for growth, an assessment is always the best plan.

The researcher is an advocate of hope and justice in the community and seeks to restore relationships that are grounded on the principles of the Christian church, where folks can share their stories of peace, hope, and justice. In a practical sense, the opportunity for intercultural communication can take place without major conflict and with a resolution for change. The researcher believes that Christ, the messenger of hope, addresses the importance of relationships and the need for the local church to educate itself to that concern.

The researcher's basic theory is to bring about change for the good of the congregation and lay leadership. Fellowship is short-term "working together, coming together," for any long-term commitment is complicated, but not impossible.

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[3] Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation To Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985), 197.

Many folks are afraid to start a new project or program. Many of the new converts will only observe but refuse to get involved because of the fear of reprisal from other members. One of the driving concerns is the ability to trust one another in the church. Trust is a key word for any organization, group, team, or church community attempting to established firm relationships. In the process for change, trust is a power principle, and without trust, organizations will be limited in their achievements. Trust is the church's expectation. Trust protects the soul of the church from decay and destruction from within. In order for trust to be a guiding concept, members, lay leaders, and church leaders must be willing to foster such an atmosphere. Creating relationships is difficult due to the family church setting of some long-time supporters.

In Phil. 1:27 KJV, Paul says, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ." Although Paul was referring primarily to the Philippians' moral lives, his words also apply to church practices. Let them be worthy of the gospel of Christ. The researcher used ethnographic interviews and a focus group to build more active relationships among the church members and leaders in the congregation.

The spiritual test, however, is to build relationships that bring connectedness so that leaders will be more motivated to be active in the work of the church, and members will be more active in developing one another as believers in the community. A qualitative research method was used in an effort to capture some culture, customs, and stories from some of the project participants. The challenge is for pastors of family churches to foster an environment of change in their churches while developing lasting relationships within the walls the congregation.

CHAPTER TWO

STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

The state of the art of this ministry is building on the premise that the church of Jesus Christ represents the values of community, unity, and relationship building. The history of new church development is unique, and developing the congregation for community development and change is a new learning approach. In "From Typical Church to Social Ministry: A Study of the Elements Which Mobilize Congregations," Carl S. Dudley provides insights on the guiding principles that have shaped his work. A time of immense possibility was created by the work of H. Paul Douglass. As a field education student with the Protestant Council of New York in the mid-1950s, Douglass first influenced the researcher when his church used Douglass' approach to help congregations adapt their programs and denominations to meet the challenge of changing social conditions.

When Douglass entered professional life at the turn of the century, he employed the sociology he learned from the University of Iowa, Columbia University, and the University of Chicago to address the problems confronting churches. Along with his field notes and interviews, Douglass was the first to make extensive use of survey methods and demographic data in both church and community analysis. Even with his pioneering work, though studied and reprinted by university sociologists, he felt unable to break into

the tight circles of denominational decision-making or the glacial traditions of theological education.[4]

Change and relationship building are needed in the lives of mainline, protestant, and black churches. In his book, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook,* Dr. Carl Dudley asserts:

> Theology can be the springboard for spiritual renewal and revitalization of a congregation. And theology can help congregations meet change not only in a way more faithful to their traditions and aspirations, but proactively and prophetically if that is God's call to them.[5]

With respect to the project, research and literary review raise three areas for consideration: (1) Change is problematic, (2) Change is slow and long term, and (3) working relationships are important to the church.

The critiques of the resources are interrelated in the study of congregations with emphases on spirituality and community development within the church. The resources share a common interest toward change. One of the greatest responsibilities of the church is change and developing leaders for church growth.

The researcher is convinced that people seeking spiritual direction must understand that the Judeo-Christian tradition holds up one imperative that summarizes all the principles of ethical and righteous living: in all circumstances, according to Deut. 6:5 (TEV) we are called to "love God with all of our heart, mind, and strength." Helping others live by the "Golden Rule" is an ethical responsibility.

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[4] Carl Dudley, "From Typical Church To Social Ministry: A Study of the Elements which Mobilize Congregations," *Review of Religious Research* 2, no. 3 (March 1991): 195.

[5] Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 25.

Becoming spiritual is more than just reading Bible verses; it is a holistic development of oneself and others. Churches must provide supportive and challenging opportunities in which persons and the people of God can explore their relationships with God and others as they embark on their spiritual reflection and journey.

In the book, *Mighty like a River: the Black Church and Social Reform,* Andrew Billingsley suggests that when people are not spirit-filled and connected, something is lost. The lack of getting involved leaves a congregation unable to function as an active people of God. Billingsley asserts, "We have found in our studies and observation that churches without dynamic and spirit-filled worship programs are not likely to sustain active community building activities. The two seem to reinforce each other."[6]

One of the uniqueness is addressing a model for the dynamics of change and building relationships that is grounded in compassion. In the article, "Saving Souls, Saving Society: Exploring the Spiritual and Social Dynamics of Church-Based Community Activism," Heidi Rolland Unruh and Ronald J. Sider assert, "Spiritual outreach is grounded in social compassion because of the urgent immediate and long-term needs of their target population."[7] The authors further add, "A different social context might engender a different expression of their mission, one lay leader suggested.

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[6] Andrew Billingsley, *Mighty Like a River: The Black Church and Social Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) accessed 24 October 2004) available from http:/hirr.hartsem.edu/about/about_orw_cong-report.html; Internet.

[7] Heidi Rolland Unruh and Ronald J. Sider, "*Saving Souls, Saving Society: Exploring The Spiritual and Social Dynamics of Church-Based Community Activism,* Proceedings at the Religious Research Association in Boston, Massachusetts, November 6, 1999, by Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 24.

The primary number one mission for Christians is to tell other people about Christ. [There are] a lot of different options we have of how to do it."[8]

In the area of adult learning, the research is clearly defined on the importance of learning and informing the congregation on faith in practice. In another study cited in the *Journal of Spirituality, Growth, and Transformation,* Elizabeth Price asserts: "These congregations risked naming and examining their own assumptions. These congregations were encouraged to think theologically, to engage metaphor and scripture, and to develop symbols."[9]

In an article, "From Individual to Corporate Praxis: A Systemic Re-imagining of Religious Education," Barbara J. Fleischer of the Loyola University of New Orleans provides meaningful literature on congregational learning. Fleischer asserts that in 1990, Peter Senge opened the floodgates of new research and writing on learning organizations by introducing the discipline of shared vision through community. She further adds, "Senge also advocates an emphasis on team learning in the praxis movements of organization life. In teams (or in congregational life, communities), members in dialogue begin learning and thinking together with respect to the issues and challenges they must face in actualizing their mission and vision."[10] There are five specific essential disciplines for organizations. The second most important discipline is the element of change and learning how to build a shared vision through community. The last author of which the

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Elizabeth J. Price, "Cognitive Complexity and the Learning Congregation," *An Interfaith Journal of Spirituality, Growth and Transformation* 99, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 367.

[10] Ibid., 327.

researcher has determined based on the model of ministry is the idea of corporate learning. This concept is the heart of the researcher's model of ministry to bring about a "systems thinking" process. Senge writes:

> The practice of shared vision involves the skills of unearthing shared "pictures of the future" that foster genuine commitment and enrollment rather than compliance. In mastering this discipline, leaders learn the counter productiveness of trying to dictate a vision, no matter how heartfelt.[11]

Senge's research is coupled with his work as an organizational consultant, primarily working out of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Sloan School of Management. Senge and his associates developed processes to help a variety of business, education, and service organizations learn the critical skills to clarify their collective optimal vision for future work on building community. The researcher's literary reviews on learning are coupled with Timothy Lines. Another asserts further:

> The advantage of using the learning organizations disciplines as a conceptual framework for religious education is that they offer a more specific approach to systemic learning than the general principles offered by Timothy Lines, although Lines' work clearly outlines the implication of "system thinking" for religious education.[12]

The final constructive research that supports this researcher's ability to get the congregation involved is the Alan Institute publication by Gilbert R. Rendle who provided information on the dynamics of change with the idea of leaders working for change. He suggested that:

> Congregational change does not happen by gathering the larger circles of active, inactive, or community members and offering education or training. Change begins at the heart of the congregation, within the leadership circle.

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[11] Ibid., 329.

[12] Ibid., 328.

> Leaders need to do the hard and necessary up-front work to understand and develop their own spirits, thoughts, and behaviors, which provide the health and the strength that will enable the congregation to live well with the stresses and demands of change.[13]

Rendle documents the response to congregational dynamics of change and behaviors as "sameness." Rendle is radical in his approach to helping leaders change. Changing the way a congregation thinks and behaves is not a quick and easy exercise for leaders because it means wrestling with learned behaviors that people often practice without thinking.

To such a degree, changing the feelings and behaviors of a congregation is changing the culture of the congregation, for organizational culture is based on the way assumptions of the organization give it identity and purpose. In the article entitled, "Rethinking Faith Formation" by Sondra Higgins, she reveals the importance of Christians building relationships that bring meaning, purpose, and direction.

Higgins argues that a faith community's role is to participate in God's work by creating an intentional process of coming to know oneself as a Christian, having assimilated the values, beliefs, and lifestyle of one who professes to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Higgins argues that the aim of faith formation is a deepening relationship with God, or what some would call "spirituality," and the faithful witness of word and action that grows out of this relationship. Relationships in the church or community are also important because they bring people together to achieve a common goal.

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[13] Gilbert R. Rendle, *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders*, (Washington, DC: The Alban Institute), 173.

With respect to the black church on the capacity to change, there is an appreciation of how a particular contingent value functions within the black church community. In an article entitled, "Understanding the Black Church: The Dynamics of Change," Douglas and Hopson assert:

> The change process, therefore, must address the role that this particular value plays in the entire life of black people. Thus, a variety of expertise is needed to accomplish viable change (i.e., sociological, psychological, and anthropological, as well as theological expertise).[14]

Further:

> Given the black church's fundamental conserving quality, it does not easily accommodate change. As both a social and religious center, it holds fast to what works. The structures, systems, and values that are perceived to benefit black social, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health are virtually intractable.[15]

The researcher's literature presented is consistent on the engagement of congregation learning combined with helping people understand themselves as proactive leaders in the church. Another example of engaging community within the tradition of the church is a systems approach to pastoral leadership. Mansell outlines four areas of congregational acceptance in which the director or leader will negotiate group dynamics to bring about unity, harmony, and the development of building community within the church or group process. It is in the key word, *negotiation,* a word that represents the intricate nature of the unending interaction between a pastor and congregation, that leads

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[14] Kelly Brown Douglas and Ronald E. Hopson, "Understanding the Black Church: The Dynamics of Change," *The Journal of Religious Thought* 8:18-21.

[15] Ibid. 104.

to leader acceptance. Patterson's four stages of acceptance are pictured in terms of a movement from "forming," to "storming," to "norming," to "performing."[16]

The four stages of change are as follows:

> Stage 1 is Storming. In this stage, you have a group of individuals not yet systemically related to one another, except on an ad hoc basis. They are just getting together. The pastor is off to one side existentially and emotionally. The group may have called the pastor to serve it or to serve with it. Acceptance is pending. The system is not yet for the leader. The group has not yet given the leader full authority. The congregation does not yet manifest the properties of wholeness, synergy, and isomorphism. Basically, the pastor is functioning to bring the group together at stated times---Christian service, a Bible study, prayer, or worship. That is all that is happening. A pastor in this new position should listen, observe, and not start many new things. It is probably wise for the pastor to do little that is new in a first year of ministry, except that which the people themselves might want to initiate.[17]

> Stage 2 is Forming. In this stage, the congregation moves toward forming its own identity and purpose. Having a new leader, the congregation is moving toward the formation of a new system. Between pastor and people there is a growing sense of common identity and shared goals, yet the pastor-leader is still perceived as an outsider, as a person negotiating the way" in." It is a strange paradox: The church is forming as much by the leader's function as by its own; yet, it is still holding the pastor at arm's length.[18]

This stage is called storming because the new pastor-leader is a "disturbance" in the group. The pastor's presence introduces different paradigms that have not yet been realized. Patterson explains the third stage as follows:

> Stage 3 is Norming. Problems in the journey to commonality become evident. What happens? The shared identity and common purpose requires each person to contribute more or less in the same way. This has the effect of blocking individuality, an often-stressful experience for many Western people. As the congregation gets down to work, members feel a heightened tension between

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[16] R. Paul Stevens and Phil Collins, *The Equipping Pastor,* (Washington, DC: The Alban Institute, 1993), 10.

[17] Ibid., 10.

[18] Ibid., 11.

> personal self-fulfillment and the church's corporate achievement. Some members, protesting against the "tyranny of the group," assert their individual identity. Some of these "deviants" may withdraw from the church to protest their own individual freedoms. Sometimes the church excludes them and conflict ensues.[19]

Building community is a continuous process with a variety of signature people, including the congregation, family, peers, and a combination of factors that are hidden from view and ever for discussion.

The researcher is also concerned with literature regarding the relationship between church spiritual nurture and social activism as it relates to change. An article entitled, "Saving Souls, Saving Society: The Role of Evangelism in Church-Based Social Ministries," provides three specific positive areas to review, as follows:

> (1) Agency: What is believed to come about through evangelism and/or social ministry, or what desired outcomes are associated with each? Some of the possibilities: Doing social ministry leads to opportunities for evangelism; only spiritual change makes real social change possible; spiritual nurture and social activism together are necessary to build up the church as an alternative community of peace and injustice; or evangelism and social ministry have no consequential connection.[20]

> (2) Motivation: What reasons do people give for being involved in outreach? Are the goals spiritual and/or social? For some, seeing people come to Jesus is their greatest reward; others are motivated by seeing a homeless family housed. Others derive personal motivation and a pattern for service from their own experience of spiritual and/or social deliverance. Someone who has had a life-changing conversion experience is more likely to incorporate an evangelistic emphasis into his or her ministry.[21]

> (3) Theology/worldview: How are evangelistic and social ministries related in the church's theological principles, their use of Scripture, or their fundamental worldview (their understanding of nature of persons and spiritual/social realities)? What influences or models (besides Scripture) shape this understanding of the

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[19] Ibid., 11.

[20] Heidi Rolland Unruh, "Saving Souls, Saving Society: The Role of Evangelism in Church-Based Social Ministries," Paper presented at the Religious Research Association Annual Meeting, Boston: November 6, 1999.

[21] Ibid.

> relationship between evangelism and social outreach? A church may defend the primacy of evangelism based on the Great Commission, go into all the world and make disciples; or it may model its understanding of ministry after Jesus, who came both to preach the Good News to the poor and set free the oppressed; or it may claim a historic legacy of championing the cause of social justice, based on a world view in which personal well-being is linked not only (or primarily) to individual spirituality but to the struggle for group rights.[22]

The state of the art of ministry is created out of understanding the importance of relationships. For this researcher, there are four specific assumptions for this project:

1. Congregates need to seek new opportunities for learning without following old rules. This assumption helps explore ways of addressing the issue of change with the ability to reflect, connect, decide, and to do. Congregational members and leaders learn best when they are doing something that reflects on what they just completed or what they learned. This opportunity to learn in community builds the best fellowship among members.

2. Change produces "heart feelings," which is good and not to be avoided. Working with different ideas that produce conflict is good in a time of change. If the congregation and the lay folks have only one idea, trying to do something different is difficult.

3. The congregation needs to appreciate experimentation. Learning requires the hard work of analysis, discussion, and discernment. Learning requires the willingness to experiment with new programs and new approaches that will provide new information, which will in turn achieve community among its members.

4. Leadership is a spiritual reality in the church or congregation. The congregation or church must move and find its relationships within its tradition, and in the changed

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[22] Ibid., 4.

lives of its members. Leaders and lay folks have a crucial responsibility of building relationships and community in order to be effective stewards of Christ's service.

This approach is basic to developing leaders and good working relationships so that folks can respect the rights of others and trust one another. When relationships are formed, people begin to remember stories that bring a sense of connectedness to one another. Ultimately, a model for building relationships among congregates is to articulate a sense of purpose and connectedness. In the final analysis, trust is the key to bringing about lasting working relationships where positive change can take place. There are several working principles unique to this model, taken from Dr. Robert Rogers:

> These principles on believing are common to church members (1) have a deep desire to make a difference; (2) can be trusted to make the right decisions; (3) have genuinely worthwhile ideas; (4) will enthusiastically respond to the opportunity for personal involvement when they see they can also contribute to deciding the focus of ministry; (5) have the most direct knowledge of ministry needs and challenges; and (6) work best when teamed up with other members who have similar interests and passions.[23]

Dr. Saul Trinidad, Hispanic Lay Theology, depicts one of the major aspects to relationships and change. African American churches located in Hispanic and Latino communities need to address the complex problem of building relationships with folks from third-world countries. The National Plan, implemented by the United Methodist Church, developed a training program for Hispanic leadership. The aim, according to Dr. Trinidad, is "to help make possible a new way of being the church: a dynamic, growing church, as in the days of Pentecost; a church fully incarnated in the Hispanic context; and

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[23] Robert W. Rogers, *The Psychological Contract of Trust: Trust Development in the '90s Workplace* (Pittsburgh, PA: Development Dimensions International, 1994), 24-25.

a church with a holistic ministry."[24] Consequently, Dr. Trinidad assures that "in preparing the didactic sources materials, care has been taken to consider the experiences, knowledge, and the academic level of the majority of the Hispanic laity."[25]

Author Edgar H. Schein, in his work entitled, *Organizational Culture,* introduces a dynamic change model, comprised of five specific steps: (1) specifying goals, (2) comparing the present status with the first ideal, (3) dealing with tension, (4) developing a plan for change, and (5) revisiting goals and the vision to count the cost of the new plan. Conflict around change comes when tension is not resolved in a productive way. He also states that the process of acknowledging tension by:

> unfreezing, or creating a motivation to change…is, of necessity, composed of three very different processes, each of which (emphasis mine) must be present to a certain degree for the system to develop any motivation to change: 1) enough disconfirming data to cause serious discomfort and disequilibrium; 2) the connection of the disconfirming data to important goals and ideals causing anxiety and or guilt; and 3) enough psychological safety, in the sense of seeing a possibility of solving the problem without loss of identity or integrity.[26]

This researcher agrees that there are different levels of tension and group dynamics, and for some groups it is not easy to motivate or to change the hearts and minds of folks. However, the method for change and relationships or connecting with folks must reach at the core value of change for the good of the community. One's spiritual nurture and Christian living is helping others work through issues in order to

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[24] Saul Trindad, "Hispanic Lay Theology: Reflections on an emerging Model." *Quarterly Review: a Journal of theological Resources For Ministry, Revitalizing Theological Reflection in the Congregation,* 21 (Spring 2001): 58.

[25] Ibid., 60.

[26] Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992), 298-299.

address the mission of the church. While the mission is clearly to make disciples, it is also to transform lives in the community.

Further, this researcher believes that working through a process of change for the good of the church is healthy and will develop new sound leadership. As Christian workers and leaders, we often speak about change on a broader scale. Our local church community as a whole may need to change its views and move in a different direction for the future of others.

Summary

The Mount Calvary Baptist Church is a medium size congregation with a small core group of dedicated leaders. The description reflect some of the structure and theology. Systems are changing and the ability to "make all things new" can and will succeed when unity of purpose is achieved. This may be problematic for those seeking not to change and make a difference in the lives of the congregation and themselves as lay leaders in the family of God. Proactive change and having positive relationships through an active engagement moves toward what God expects of those entrusted in his care.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

This chapter contains a review of the theological, biblical, and historical perspectives associated with the researcher's view for developing opportunities for positive change and building relationships.

A review of the theologies is critical to the African American life. The works of Dr. James Cone and many other theologians have given rise to liberation and faith. A review of womanish theology is also necessary to systematic change in the lives of women and in the ministry of the church. Professional women in music have also contributed greatly to the cause of change and relationships.

In his book, *God of the Oppressed,* James H. Cone affirms his statement of what black theology is:

> Black Theology is a theology of and for black people, an examination of their stories, tales, and sayings. It is an investigation of the mind into the raw materials of our pilgrimage, telling the Stories of "how we got over." For theology to be black, it must reflect upon what it means to be Black. Black theology must uncover the structures and forms of the black experiences, because the categories of interpretation must arise out of the thought forms of the black experience itself.[27]

Paulo Freire asserts in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: "One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge human beings' consciousness."[28] *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,*

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[27] James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* (New York: Orbis Books, 1975).

[28] Paulo Friere, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum International, 2002), 51.

which is the pedagogy of people engaged in the fight for their own liberation, has its roots here. Those who recognize, or begin to recognize, themselves as oppressed must be among the developers of this pedagogy.[29] The challenge of the 21st century will be to develop a methodology that helps the "least of our community." In his book, *Heart and Head,* Dwight Hopkins pointed out that black theology has a faith connection. Hopkins asserts, "Based on the Christian scripture, the progressive sector of the African American church, for which a black theology speaks, maintains a subversive faith in Jesus Christ's spirit."[30]

Dr. Hopkins provides an accurate account of black theology when he says, "Black theology spiritual practice fundamentally means social transformation of wicked structures and destructive systems that hold a boot to the necks of the poor blacks in the United States."[31]

After a review of the theologies that affect the poor and the oppressed, the local church needs to evaluate its options for equipping the saints of God. According to Dr. Hopkins, we need to foster an attitude of social empowerment for equipping congregations toward a radical and progressive theology. First, the researcher will reflect on the three vital theologies that appeal to the circumstances of the poor and the oppressed, which includes black theology, liberation theology, and womanish theology. Then, he will review the doctrine of humanity and the implications for these theologies. Finally, the exploration of these theologies in the context of the African American urban

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[29] Ibid., 54.

[30] Dwight Hopkins, *Heart and Head* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 78.

[31] Ibid., 78.

parish will give new understanding of equipping those to explore a new paradigm of hope.

As one appreciates the value of the human spirit, applying theology of humanity is essential to understanding the poor and the oppressed with the idea of social change. African American and other liberation theologians from around the world have defined "structures and systems of oppression, degradation, and marginalization,"[32] and "African American and other liberation theologians have emphasized inherent human dignity and its diminishment through structures and systems of oppression, degradation, and marginalization."[33] They argue that the struggle against oppression and for liberation is religious as well as sociopolitical. This struggle for "full humanity" demonstrates and restores human dignity, not only for the oppressed, but also for the oppressor, whose "humanity is diminished by participation in and collusion with domination."[34]

A central strategy for social transformation and change is essential in the face of the problems associated with poverty, the poor, and the oppressed. In a time of rapid social change, there is intense interest in what it means to be human or humane. The doctrine of humanity, therefore, "addresses a question of potentially greater interest than any other area in theology."[35]

In the twentieth century, black theologies in American arose from the context of the civil rights black power movement. This was consistent with the history of blacks in

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32 Ibid., 134.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

America, shaped by the experiences of slavery, discrimination, and injustice. James Evans in his book, *We Have Been Believers,* asserts:

> Black religion has always concerned itself with the fascination of an incorrigibly religious people with the mystery of God, but it has been equality concerned with the yearning of a despised and subjugated people for freedom-freedom from the religious, economic, social, and political domination that whites have exercised over blacks since the beginning of the African slave trade.[36]

It is important to understand black theology from the perspective of the oppressed and the poor. The social gospel had an impact on the lives of people, and society needed a change for the good of humanity. Black theology is a challenge to the status symbols of society, and addresses the political and social ills of our society. In his book, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, Walter Rauschenbusch states:

> The social movement is the most important ethical and spiritual movement in the modern world, and the social gospel is the response of the Christian consciousness to it. The social gospel is the old message of salvation, but enlarged and intensified. The individualistic gospel has taught us to see the sinfulness of every human heart and has inspired us with faith in the willingness and power of God to save every soul that comes to him.[37]

The writer's view is that black theology and the social gospel seek to bring men and women under the repentance for the wrongs of society and the suffering of generations.

Black theology can and must address the problems associated with poverty, the poor, and the oppressed. It must be both prophetic and liberative in its efforts. The ideas of justice and hope are related in the theme of hope and liberation.

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[36] Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of Afro-American People,* 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), X.

[37] Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminister John Knox, 1997), 4-5.

Theologically, God's love is prior to the other themes. In order to separate love in the context of black religion from a similar theme in white religion, however, it is important to emphasize that love in black religion is usually linked with God's justice and hope. "God's love is made known through divine righteousness, liberating the poor for a new future."[38] One of the driving themes of liberation of black theology is hope. In an article entitled, "Calling the Oppressors to Account: Justice, Love, and Hope in Black Religion," James Cone asserts: "The theme of justice is closely related to the idea of hope. The God who establishes the right and puts down the wrong is the sole basis of the hope that the suffering of the victims will be eliminated."[39]

Black theologies are connected to the Christian message of Jesus Christ and to God's work of deliverance. African American people should review where they are in the struggle for justice and hope. Black, liberation, and womanish theologies speak of hope and liberation. James Cone indicates that the

> norm of black theology must take seriously two realities, actually two aspects of a single reality: the liberation of blacks and the revelation of Jesus Christ. For these two realities form the norm of a black theology: The norm of all God-talk which seeks to be black-talk is the manifestation of Jesus as the black Christ who provides the necessary soul for black liberation."[40]

One of the aspects of supporting the local church in a strategy for social change for the poor and the oppressed is the understanding of scripture within a black theology.

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[38] Quinton Hosford Dixie and Cornel West, *The Courage To Hope*: *From Black Suffering To Human Redemption* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1999), 77.

[39] Ibid., 76.

[40] James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986), 38.

In spite of all of the theologies in question, black theology is grounded in biblical scripture and is the cornerstone of faith.

Scripture in Black Theology

Throughout the life of the late Dr. Martin L. King, Jr, the writings of Walter Rauschenbusch and the social gospel movement influenced King. Rauschenbusch stressed the prophetic model of religion with a public stand against injustice and immorality. The public evil of millions of poor people and the evil societal condition of poverty is sinful and oppressive. Dr. King was greatly influenced by Rauschenbusch's work and his deep concern for the poor. King was deeply inspired by what he studied and experienced; for example, King's study on the Hebrew prophets and scripture is related to the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes in Matthew, chapter 5, NASB:

> Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:3-11 NASB).

Dr. Martin L. King, Jr., repeatedly quoted the famous passage from Amos 5:24 NASB: "But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a might stream." Scripture is a biblical hermeneutic for change and, in the experience of black theology, equipping the local church for action.

The biblical stories and scriptural passages that have historically found their way into black preaching are those that have clearly demonstrated the mighty acts of God on behalf of people who were in situations of powerlessness consistent with, though not the

same as, those of the forcibly displaced Africans in America. Stories, as well as other passages of scripture, that speak of the mighty acts of God on behalf of the marginalized initially attracted blacks to the God of the Christian religion during the days of slavery. "Black folks embraced this God by the thousands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries after hearing the good news of God's promise of salvation from sin and death, but also after hearing of what God had done for the oppressed in biblical times."[41]

The theme of justice and Yahweh's special concern for the poor and the widows has a central place in Israelite prophecy according to Dr. James Cone. In the book of Jeremiah, for example:

> For among my people there are wicked men,
> their houses are full of fraud,
> as a cage is full of birds.
> They grow rich and grand,
> bloated and rancorous;
> their thoughts are all of evil, and they refuse to do justice,
> the claims of the orphan they do not put right
> nor do they grant justice to the poor (Jer. 5:26-28 NEB).

Cone asserts:

> The emphasis upon justice for the poor is present even in a prophet like Isaiah of Jerusalem, for whom David's reign, rather than the Exodus, is the significant act of deliverance. According to Isaiah, "Yahweh bound himself by a covenant oath to David, promising to preserve the Davidic line to spare the Davidic kingdom for the sake of my servant David' . . . (Isa. 37:35, see II Sam. 7)."[42]

Dr. Cone makes it clear that in almost every scene of the Old Testament drama of salvation, the poor are defended against the rich, the weak against the strong. Yahweh is

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[41] Cleophus J. LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 15.

[42] James Cone, *God of The Oppressed*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1975), 68.

the God of the oppressed whose revelation is identical with their liberation from bondage. Even in the wisdom literature, where the sages seem to be unaware of Israel's saving history, God's concern for the poor is nonetheless emphasized:

> He who is generous to the poor lends to the Lord (Prov. 19:17 NEB).
>
> He who oppresses the poor insults his Maker; he who is generous to the needy honors him (Prov. 14:13 NEB).

Black theology addresses the poor and Yahweh's own, his special possession. These are the people that the Divine has called into being for freedom. God, or Yahweh, judges the Israelites based on how they treat the poor. The indictment is hard, painful, and severe:

> The Lord comes forward to argue his case and stands to judge his people. The Lord opens the indictment against the elders of his people and their officers: They have ravaged the vineyard, and the spoils of the poor are in your houses. Is it nothing to you that you crush my people and grind the faces of the poor? (Isa. 3:13-15 NEB)

J. Deotis Roberts has written of the theological significance of scripture for black theology:

> The Bible, for blacks, is a "living book." Recognition of the creative and providential involvement of God in the history of the people of the Old Testament is basic to black interpretation. A direct relationship through faith exists between God's acts of liberating Israel and the freedom struggle of blacks. In black theology, there is no "quest" for the historical Jesus. Jesus is present as a Divine Friend. The prophet speaks for God in judgment against the dehumanization of the poor and the weak. However, there is also an awareness of sin and guilt and the need for forgiveness among blacks. Black theology also recognizes God's forgiveness of the oppressor who meets God's demands for justice and love toward the needy and the helpless. This is not "cheap grace," for it includes the acceptance of the dignity and equality of all human beings and the sharing of power.[43]

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[43] J. Deotis Roberts, *Black Theology in Dialogue* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1987), 36.

In the last forty years, black theology has attempted to serve as the biblical hermeneutic for black liberation and for the black church. Along with James Cone, J. Deotis Roberts and Dwight Hopkins are viewed as the indisputable progenitors of the academic communities, supporting local congregations to identify the need for liberation for leaders of local congregations to address the issues of the poor and the oppressed. Forrest Harris provides yet another view that supports a constructive theology of the oppressed viewing the black church as a method for social change and transformation. He brings the community and church together through theological reflection and social analysis when he asserts:

> The task of every Christian is to do theology in terms of seeking to understand how God acts in history and in the life of the community. Black theology affirms that the "black experience" of survival and liberation are in solidarity with the redemptive and liberating acts of God. The task, then, of black theology is to interpret how God is a concrete part of the black experience and to articulate the conditions of God's involvement in the particular experience.[44]

The researcher's view is that womanish theology can speak to change in holistic values. Womanish theology, alongside a review of black theology, provides an effective strategy of black liberation. Black womanish theologians like Katie Cannon, Jacquelyn Grant, Delores Williams, Kelly Brown Douglas, Marcia, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, Cheryl Sanders, Linda Thomas, and others represent prophetic voices of hope for the poor and the oppressed, and the black community.

Womanish theology is encouraged by Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Alice Walker and others. Walker coined the term "womanish" in her 1983 book *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens,* when she said, "You are acting womanish." According to

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[44] Forrest E. Harris, *Ministry For Social Crisis* (Macon, GA.: Mercer University Press, 1993), 55.

Walker, this means "wanting to know more and in greater depth than is good for one . . . outrageous, audacious, courageous, and willful behavior."[45]

Womanish theology is a theology of empowerment and seeks to bring about a holistic perspective with a concern for the suffering and celebration of others. According to Katie G. Cannon:

> The main focus of womanish ethics is on justice for women, survival, and "a productive quality of life for poor women, children, and men." This means the womanish theologian "must give authoritatively status to black folk wisdom (e.g., Brer Rabbit literature) and to black women's moral wisdom (expressed in their literature) when she responds to the question, "How ought the Christian to live in the world?"[46]

Womanish theology can and will play a vital role in equipping the local church to address those issues of empowerment and the celebration of the issues associated with African American women in the African American church and community. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes says in her book, *If It Wasn't For the Women*:

> Among the crises facing African Americans today, and one that is following us into the 21st century, is the situation of poor women in our communities. Folk wisdom recognizes the importance of "the mothers" to the survival and health of the community and to the perpetuation of worthwhile dimensions of African-American culture. Christian ministry is defined ultimately by its service to, with, and on behalf of "the least of these."[47]

The local church must begin to address womanish issues like sexism and the treatment of black women, even in the church.

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[45] Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Garden* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich, 1983), 101.

[46] Katie G. Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics,* American Academy of Religion Academy Series, ed. Susan Thistlethwaite, no. 60 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), 185.

[47] Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, *If It Wasn't For The Women: Ministry to Women Hearing and Empowering Black Poor Women* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), 197.

In a book she edited, entitled, *Living Stones in the Household of God: The Future of Black Theology,* Dr. Linda Thomas asserts, "Womanish theology showcases the overlooked styles and contributions of all black women whether they are poor, and perhaps illiterate, or economically advantaged and "Ph.D.'ed."[48] Dr. Thomas furthers adds:

> An ethnographic methodology necessitates our entering the communities of these women, constituting focus groups and utilizing their life experiences as the primary sources for the development of questions which established a knowledge base from everyday people.[49]

Womanish theology and scripture are hopeful on linking the poor and the oppressed as a model to biblical understanding. It is linked to family and building working relationships within the context of change.

Black women hold the Bible as a major source of religious validation in their lives. They are able to identify and reflect upon those biblical stories in which poor oppressed women had a special encounter with divine emissaries of God. The story of Hagar in the book of Genesis, for example, is "most illustrative and relevant to Afro-American women's experience of bondage, of African heritage, and of an encounter with God in the midst of fierce survival struggles."[50]

In the New Testament, womanish theologians focus on the beginning of the salvation story when the Spirit comes upon Mary, a poor woman (Lk. 1:35). Luke 18: 1-6

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[48] Linda E. Thomas, ed. *Living Stones in the Household of God: The Future of Black Theology,* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 39.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Donald K. McKim, *The Bible In Theology and Preaching* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 185.

is a parable Jesus tells about a poor widow who continuously comes before an unjust male judge.

A womanish theology has the ability to bring about transformation in the life of the poor, the oppressed, and the congregation. Through history, we recognize the work of liberation and freedom for black women in our present age. According to Dr. Dwight Hopkins' book, *Down, Up, and Over:*

> The poor and brokenhearted are co-agents with divine intent to fashion a new emancipated human self. In a word, God works with us through the act of freedom, as we constitute ourselves from oppression to a full reality of the highest potential of a liberated humanity. God liberates us totally and holistically."[51]

Cheryl Sanders observes that the primary purposes of theology are the narratives, autobiographies, novels, poetry, prayers, and other writings that convey black women's traditions, culture, and history:

> The method developed to appropriate these sources can also be summarized in terms of its celebrative, critical, and constructive intent, inclusive of 1) the celebration of black women's historical struggles and strength; 2) the critique of various manifestations of black women's oppression in terms of race, class, and sex; and 3) the construction of black women's distinctive theological and ethical claims towards a liberative praxis.[52]

This researcher is convinced that liberation theologies can help identify issues appropriate to the African American context and raise awareness of the constant need for change and relationships that are vital to the need for success. The proposition of black theology, liberation theology, and womanish theology is a constant reminder of how

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[51] Dwight Hopkins, *Down, Up, and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 160.

[52] Cheryl Sanders, ed., *Living The Intersection: Womanism and Afrocentrism in Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 158.

these theologies have taken root in our local congregations and how change and hope has taken place among these theologies.

Biblical Foundation

Dr. William R. Herzog, II, in his book *Jesus, Justice, and the Reign of God,* says: "Jesus criticizes them for tithing 'mint, dill, and cummin,' herbs not covered by tithing requirements, while neglecting 'the weightier matters of the law': justice and mercy and faith (Matt. 23:23a)."[53]

Israel was to be the image and chosen people of God, exhibiting God's glory in love toward God and human beings. Loving one's neighbor meant making no class distinctions. The urban world of promised inheritance that the Israelites entered was a world of haves and have-nots; a class society of powerful and powerless; and ethnic divisions of insider, outsider, and stranger. Poverty and oppression were also enemies to overcome in the mission of a new community. The stated reality that there would always be poor people in the land only underlined Israel's calling to be "openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy," according to Deut. 15:11.

When looking at a biblical perspective or foundation for the poor and the oppressed, it is clear to the researcher that liberation justice is imperative in the Old and New Testament biblical readings. It is not enough, however, to say that God reveals Himself in history, and that therefore Israel's faith fleshes out a historical framework. This is the meaning of Yahweh's interventions in history. The purpose of God's activity is not to demonstrate his power, but to liberate and make justice reign:

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[53] William Herzog, *Jesus, Justice and the Reign of God* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2000), 168.

> Father of orphans, defender of widows
> Such is God in his holy dwelling;
> God gives the lonely a permanent home,
> Makes prisoners happy by setting them free,
> But rebels must live in an arid land (Ps. 68:5-6 NRSV)

The God of history and the God of biblical proclamation is a God of justice. His power is expressed in defending the rights of the poor:

> Who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The Lord gives freedom to the prisoners. The Lord opens the righteous. The Lord watches over the stranger; He relieves the fatherless and widow; but the way of the wicked He turns upside down (Ps. 146:7-9 NRSV).

The knowledge of God is love of God. In the language of the Bible, "to know" is not something purely intellectual. To "know" means to love. Sin is the absence of the knowledge of Yahweh, and it is on this that the people will be judged, according to Hos. 4:1 TEV: "Sons of Israel listen to the word of Yahweh, for Yahweh indicts the inhabitants of the country."

One of the greatest narratives of the Old Testament is Nehemiah's forward and positive efforts to build relationships and build the wall. He was a governor who not only had the heart of the people in the land of Judah, but also the hope of building relationships in order to complete the building of the wall. Throughout the six chapters of Nehemiah, he depended on God in his efforts to finish building the wall, even though the threat of being killed and stopping the work was upon him. Neh. 6:10-13 TEV says:

> One day when I went into the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah son of Mehetabel, who was confined to his house, he said, "let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you; indeed, tonight they are coming to kill you." But, I said, "Should a man like me run away? Would a man like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in!" Then I perceived and saw that God had not sent him at all, but he had pronounced the prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. He was hired for this purpose, to intimidate me and make me sin

> by acting in this way, and so they could give me a bad name, in order to taunt me." (Neh. 6:10-13 TEV)

Building relationships was key to Nehemiah's success with God and his people. With Nehemiah's confidence in God and the work of the faithful, the returning exiles began to believe and know that God is faithful. Relationships, however, are built with conversation; time spent together; and common faith---one word, one action, one gesture at a time.

It is clear that the prophet Amos was deeply concerned about the poor and their relationship with God. Our relationship with God is expressed in our relations with the poor. As Prov. 17:5 NKJV says, "He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker." One important factor related to this Old Testament view is the covenant God made with Abraham. This covenant implies a *double belonging* according to Gutierrez in his book, *The Power of the Poor in History: Biblical Overview*:

> God to the Jewish people and of the Jewish people to God. The guarantee of this mutual possession is Yahweh's love, as expressed in the deed by which he liberated the people servitude in Egypt. Yahweh demands in exchange that the people bear witness to him in history.[54]

The Exodus provides a perspective in which the covenant is situated and the covenant gives full meaning to the liberation from Egypt. Liberation leads to communion. This is the process by which the "people of God" are built. To be just is to be faithful to the covenant. To be faithful to the covenant means to practice the justice implied in God's liberating activity on behalf of the oppressed. This practice of justice as an

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[54] Gustavo Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History: Biblical Overview* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 9.

expression of fidelity is found in the promise that precedes the covenant struck with Abraham:

> Now, Yahweh wondered, "Shall I conceal from Abraham what I am going to do, seeing that Abraham will become a great nation with all the other nations of the earth blessing themselves by him? For I have singled him out to command his sons and his household after him to maintain the way of Yahweh by just and upright living. In this way, Yahweh will carry out for Abraham what he has promised him (Gen. 18:17-19 NRSV).

One of the central concerns of the New Testament church is Paul's concern for the poor and sharing the Good News. Taking the Good News to the Gentiles is bringing to them "the unsearchable riches of Christ," according to Eph. 3:8 NIV. The call to conversion is a declaration of what God in Christ has done, is doing, and will do.

The urban lifestyle of Paul's New Testament world existed as a lifestyle of survival with the hope of a new direction and change. It was to be society's new direction, modeling before the city of God's divine intentions for his creation. According to Dr. Stambaugh book, *The New Testament In Its Social Environment*:

> Repeatedly the church found itself at points of tension in cities divided socially, economically and ethnically. At these points, the Church's calling was to demonstrate a new kind of community, one where rich and poor were to share hare the same table (1 Cor 11:18-22) and where runaway slaves became brothers (Philem. 15-16). In a society where the brutal disparities of power and the powerlessness where political realities, the Christian community echoed with Paul and Jesus, "My grace is all you need, for my power is strongest when you are weak" (2 Cor. 12:9 TEV).[55]

In a top-down society where ranking was measured by such standards as occupational prestige, income, education, and family position, according to Meeks in *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, the church found room for

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[55] John Stambaugh and David Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1986), 110.

all, with a particular concern for those at the social ladder's bottom rung (1 Cor. 1:26-28). The Christian church is called to respond with a "can-do mentality." Paul's letters indicate that the churches had their share of well-to-do Christians who had benefited from the Lord's grace upon them.

The more we look into the New Testament, the more we see scriptures that address the issue of doing well. God's people were to be city lights shining before the Gentiles, "that they may see your good works and praise your Father in Heaven (Matt. 5:14-16 TEV).

Evidence is given to scholarship that compassion and reaching out into the city to those who are less fortunate is a good thing. According to Oritz in his book, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City and the People of God*:

> The welfare of the city in the Greco-Roman world depended on the ongoing contributions of civic-minded benefactors. They paid for public works from their private resources in order to enhance the environs of their cities and, in time of famine, to ensure the supply of grain at a cost affordable to every citizen.[56]

At the heart of Paul's missionary method was his perspective on the history of redemption. God's new order had initiated through the coming of Christ and his death and resurrection. Through the coming of the Holy Spirit, a new age was being constructed while the old age still existed. The Jubilee day of salvation, the time of favor when God would restore the land (Isa. 49:8), was no longer a promissory note; it was "now." Paul affirmed that now "is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2 NIRV).

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[56] Manuel Oritz, and H. Conn, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City and the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 148.

Upon the scattered house churches of the empire, "the fulfillment of the ages has come" (1 Cor. 10:11 NIV). Paul sees his own ministry as deeply linked to that eschatological day. It is embedded in his striking phrase of self-evaluation: "I have fulfilled the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15:19 NIRV). The scope of Paul's geographical reference is "from Jerusalem all the way around Illyricum" and to the Gentile lands.

In the Hellenistic world, to speak of the inhabited world, the *oikoumene,* was to speak of the city.[57] Paul has a mission to the Gentiles. His proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles is an act of worship and praise to God. Enriching and reshaping this doxology of worship and praise are the realities of the new covenant.

The Old Testament phrase for formal Israelite worship was "to call on the name of the Lord" (Gen. 4:26; 12:8, and 26:25 NKJV). In the coming day of the Lord, God would purify even the lips of "the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord" (Zep. 3:9 KJV). In fact, everything we do, whether in word or deed, is to be done "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17 KJV). Israel's Tabernacle God has come to be with us, and Immanuel/Jesus is his name (Matt. 1:12-23).

The church is the body of Christ, that community in whom Christ dwells, turned outward in action toward the world in 1 Cor. 12:12-27 KJV:

> For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the

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[57] Harvie M. Conn, Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry* (Downers, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 150.

> smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him (1 Cor. 12:12-27 KJV).

Into the urban world came Jesus of Nazareth. Along with his coming came the inauguration of God's urban renewal plan. Babel's human quest for unity in rebellion is finally fulfilled in God's gift of unity in "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5 KJV). On a stairway-tower God stood, promising blessing to a fleeting Jacob and all the families of the earth. Out of that site emerged a city, Bethel, "the house of God." Reflecting on that history, Jesus promises to Nathaniel that a new reality has surpassed Jacob's dream: You shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man (Jn. 1:51). Jesus is the stairway, that One in whom heaven comes down to the cities of the world and through whom we ascend to the heavenly city. After three days in the belly of the great fish, a reluctant Jonah went forth, virtually resurrected form the dead, to promise God's redemption to a repenting Nineveh. Jesus preaching, "something greater than Jonah," calls the cities to repentance. In addition, the sign of his grace and power will be upon the city and all those who witness Jonah's new spirit of renewal.

Ezekiel spoke of the day when God himself would return to Zion and take up residence as its rightful king, when the Shekhina glory departed. At the center of this urban restoration, all the urban domains of royalty would be fulfilled in God. His would be the sacred city kingship "in the order of Melchizedek" (Gen. 14; Ps. 110:4 KJV). It is that end-time community which the Christ, in action as Spirit, forms and equips to continue His work of reconciling men in every city, village, and town of our time, reconciling them to God and one another.

What does it means to reach out to the poor and the oppressed? The researcher believes that the church needs biblical understanding to reach out to the poor and the oppressed. The church as a whole has often been negligent in reaching the poor because its members are not comfortable around poor people. Even those who have a kind heart struggle, as the needs seem overwhelming. God did not intend that there would be poor people in our cities. He desired Jerusalem to be "a city centered in the worship of God" and practicing what we preach and teach. Dr. Cone says in his book, *God of the Oppressed:*

> If Jesus' life with the poor reveals that the continuity between the Old and New Testaments is found in the divine will to liberate the oppressed from sociopolitical slavery, what then is the discontinuity? Or, more appropriately, in what sense does the New Testament witness take us beyond the Old and fulfill it? The new element is this: the divine freedom revealed in Jesus, as that freedom is disclosed in the cross and resurrection, is more than the freedom made possible in history. While God's freedom for the poor is not less than the liberation of slaves from bondage (Exodus), yet it is more than that historical freedom.[58]

God wants justice for his people. Dr. Cone continues:

> Jesus' conquest of Satan and the demons also carries out the theme of the liberation of the poor. "If it is by the finger of God that I drive out the devils, then be sure that the kingdom of God has already come upon you" (Lk. 11:20 NEB). Jesus' power to exorcize demons is the sine qua non of the appearance of the kingdom, because freedom for the oppressed can come about only by overcoming the forces of evil.[59]

In the Old Testament and the New Testament alike, God expresses profound concern for the poor and delivers scathing indictments of all who would oppress them. Today, we cannot pretend the poor do not exist. They are in the cities and towns by the

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58 James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Orbis Books, 1975), 80.

59 Ibid., 77.

hundreds of thousands. The churches have a biblical mandate and must take responsibility and reorder priorities in order to fulfill their moral and ethical responsibilities to the poor.

Dr. Dwight N. Hopkins, in his book *Down, Up, and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology,* says: "The Spirit of liberation in us causes the bottom of society to fight to reconstitute so that the poor might have the life of their humanity made real."[60] Dr. Hopkins further adds:

> The poor and brokenhearted are co-agents with the divine intent to fashion a new emancipated human self. In a word, God works with us through the act of freedom as we constitute ourselves from oppression to a full reality of the highest potential of a liberated humanity.[61]

One of the most important aspects of this section is the impact on families and the black church. In many of our readings, we will find that the black family has its strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, there is a survival mode for the black family, where slavery's impact is clearly present. Historically the church and family have survived out of the deprivation and oppression. It is imperative that black churches continue to develop opportunities for dialogue and build bridges within the local church among themselves. In the words of Dr. Wallace Charles Smith says in his book, *The Black Church: Facing the Crisis of Family Living:*

> Sadly for many blacks, the secularization of the twentieth century has exacted a great price. The church no longer occupies the central position of authority in the life of blacks that it once did. This fact has a great impact on the families. Families who are the most broken are families who also are at the lower

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[60] Dwight Hopkins, *Down, Up, and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 247.

[61] Ibid., 160.

> end of the socioeconomic scale. Studies also indicate that it is primarily this group of the so called underclass that is not being reached by churches.[62]

In slavery and the slave system relationship, the only way African Americans could move forward was in how things were done. Relationships served as an important part of the black experience. In this context, the local church needs to value family as an intercultural relationship.

Finally, the theology discussed has a focus to the meaning of the church, community, and the pedagogical response to change. A method of hope and change in the lives of those in passing is a sign that people communicate and are liberating people for the right reason, in time and history. Historically and biblically, the stories of time can bring about community and a spirit of purpose to reclaim what is lost in the lives of the congregation and its people. Hence, the struggling church must be able to challenge the issues that hinder change in the life of the congregation.

After much consideration given to theoretical foundations, it is clear that the spiritual vision helps to drive the possibility of positive relationships. Positive energy creates positive change. The vision is founded on our experiencing our creator as continually present to us, helping each individual realize our full potential as people of God, and as participants in a process for improving relationships, roles, and life projects.

The researcher has a sense that personal identity and purpose must become a visible sign of those who are connected to positive change. It is only when compassionate believers can live out their purpose and consistently address the needs of the people that

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[62] Wallace Charles Smith, *The Church in the Life of the Black Family,* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press 1985) 23.

they can have the fortitude toward each other. As the body of Christ is actively involved, people share information more effectively and effective ministries begin to unfold.

The traditional church must be free to explore the narratives of the past in order to appreciate how God has blessed and provided the foundation for Christian service. This provides a framework for a purpose, mission, and goals. Clearly the theoretical foundation provides credibility to building relationships among people as it relates to customs, traditions, and the work of the church in our society.

Conclusion

The foundations that provide a fresh understanding of history aid in the process of understanding the human condition. The human condition is blessed with literature that is historical, traditional and contemporary literature. Literature informed all of us, on the perspective of scholarship on issues of social, political and the affairs of the human affairs in human history, and we can better serve in community. Relationship and current research that provides an inclusive understand of the theoretical foundations on sacred and secular literature. The past helps one understand the future and anticipate a positive future for generations to come. This chapter has discussed how the oppressed people have had to deal with secular society and brings solid and grounded examinations to critical thought from centuries past.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Congregational development and change is a present "danger" to any organization or church that has not examined the process of change among it congregants for more than forty years. Unfortunately, it is only when a new pastor is about to be hired that the congregation begins asking, "What kind of pastor do we need?" Processes for a shared vision where folks can communicate, listen, reflect, and dialogue on important issues are crucial to a new pastor navigating into a new experience and a new congregation, as he or she begins to explore the question of hope in an aging congregation. It is the researcher's desire that this project will provide an assessment overview on how change can influence relationships and how relationships can influence change.

The methodology is about the dynamics of change, which is risky and challenging for the congregation and church leaders. The hypothesis builds on the premise that positive relationships within the local congregation encourage change. In addition, relationships and positive change produce issues from the congregation, and the energy from this experience will bring out the issues to work on as a group.

Mentors of the United Theological Seminary granted the research designed. On selecting an appropriate way in which to perform the research using the aging congregation of Mount Calvary, it was vital to know the type of research design. In retrospect, an intercultural communication approach with a series of specific topics was designed for intensive interaction groups. Also, an ethnographic method was used to observe the behavior, social interaction, and feelings of the subject group.

The context associates were Eddie McCloud, Sonya Woodridge, Mary Kittrell, Anna Perry, Annie Mells, Sally Williams, Edward Williams, Mary Bogart, Freddie Dennis, Reverend David Lewis, and Eva Rojas. Each session, planned by the context associates, was scheduled on a Sunday. The professor associate was Dr. Fred Rose, a specialist in organization development. Dr. Rose earned his PhD in Urban Policy from Cornell University.

The objective of the project was to examine the need for change, to develop leaders through a series of exercises that build working relationships, and to engage in a collaboration and development process. The approach included a series of overlapping phases, each with its own specific focus. The contextual associates were responsible for facilitating the process and implementation. Meetings with context and other professional associates were set on April 18 and 25, 2004, as well as May, June, and July 2004. The success of the project depended on the core team to motivate lay leaders to demonstrate active engagement in group dynamics. Following is a description of the specific steps of the process.

The Project Program and Implementation

The first stage of the process is pre-campaign training, which sets the stage for sacred time and reflection. The members of Mount Calvary are spiritual people with a strong sense of purpose and will to achieve anything. For several weeks, each group held discussions in spiritual sessions prior to each of the meetings (Appendix A). The reflections at each session (Appendix B) laid the foundation for spiritual grounding.

The purpose of the relationship-building campaign (Appendix C) was to invite others to the gatherings. The question is what is a 1:1 campaign? Why are we doing this? What kind of results are we attempting to achieve---to reach as many people as possible?

The heart and soul of this relationship-building campaign is to accomplish several goals:

- To help heal broken relationships within the congregation
- To deepen the commitment of leaders and congregation
- To expand the opportunities for dialogue and discussion
- To learn how to address issues of importance

The contextual associates and the researcher developed five levels of training sessions (pre-campaign development, building relationships, housing meetings, fellowship, and issues assembly phase). The five levels were briefly summarized and illustrated. The phases included the following:

- Phase One: Pre-campaign session---the development of the team members' activities, including relationship building.
- Phase Two, relationship-building campaign: The process of generating 400 new conversations to build new relationships by July 2004. The process of getting members to commit to a specific date and time is crucial to a commitment toward the total process. Issues are addressed while motivating leaders into dialogue and discussions.

- Phase Three, post campaign action: This is an opportunity to identify issues that need attention. Training contextual associates to lead and develop others with specific guidelines.
- Phase Four, hosting meetings: Group dynamics on presentation, planning, recording, and information gathering for the major assembly. The house-meeting sessions are designed to bring people into dialogue and address issues of importance in small groups over a period of eight weeks. Participants have the opportunity to continue the process of encouraging others.
- Phase Five, the assembly: The grand finale of the event with all the issues to be coordinated.

This process helps members and leaders bring appropriate activities into a process. It is a reflective effort to bring dialogue, conversation, and communication into play. The most crucial area of the project is to mobilize congregates to address pertinent issues of the church and community.

The project provided a series of sessions for developing leaders for proactive group dynamics and change. The hypothesis is that when members of the congregation are in a learning process, they become intentional on addressing such issues among themselves. Furthermore, leaders will be able to connect and share a common vision, which is imperative congregational development.

A qualitative research method is used with the ethnography and learning sessions so that church members understand how to connect with each other.

The Design

This project examined the need for change through building working relationships. The project employed an eight-week campaign to build new leaders and improve working relationships. Learning concepts from congregational studies and strategies enhanced church leaders and members to view each other as the "people of God."

The following format included:

1. Phase One: Pre-Campaign Recruitment
    - Overview of 1:1 Campaign
    - Training and individual meetings
    - Roles and Responsibilities
2. Phase Two: Campaign Relationships
    - Faith Reflection
    - Purpose, Goals, and Timeline of Action
    - One-on-One Training
3. Phase Three: Post-Campaign Relationships
    - Campaign Evaluation
    - Next Action Steps
    - Issue Assembly

The participants were asked specific questions relating to the project:

1. What was your impression of the project?
2. What did you learn about change?

3. What is your impression on leadership participation?
4. What did you learn, and how did change help relationship building?
5. How is change possible with this project?

Participants depend on each other as each phase progresses to the next step. The key is to bring folks together with the following benefits:

1. Participants learn the value of connecting with one another.
2. Participants learn the value of dialogue.
3. Participants learn the value of teamwork.
4. Participants learn the value of addressing issues without conflict.

Evaluation

The project is unique in that it focuses on process, and the path of learning depends on continued evaluation for implementation. The evaluation is a method for change and the uncertainty on how participants with take part. This relational project reaches at the heart of conflict, emotions, and unfamiliar areas and seeks to help people think about ministry, learning, relationships and leadership. Ethnography is the field research concept of cultural anthropology. "In order for the ethnographic enterprise to be successful, the anthropologist must be able to behave appropriately within the object of community 'and to learn.'"[63] Further:

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[63] Linda E. Thomas, *Upon the Canopy* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 128.

> Achieving these goals involves participating in the community while remaining outside of the culture of experience for the project. Ethnographers are able to build a theory of events by talking with informants to establish relationships among a series of events (Agar 1980:115)."[64]

This methodology is structured to reinforce change and healthy relationships. The small groups are also important because the group process demonstrates the intercultural communication connections while achieving Christian unity in the quest for change.

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[64] Ibid., 128.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

The driving force of this project is to bring the commitment level of the participants to the point of getting involved, while moving them to develop working relationships and the opportunity to seek change within the local church.

The project was generated around the spirit of the participants using several methods for learning. The team supported the efforts of recruitment, training, and instruments for implementation. Before an interview could be conducted, a release form was designed to accommodate all involved in the interview process.

Weaknesses of the Project and Research

Among those limitations were the following:

1. In-depth interviews with children and younger persons at Mount Calvary
2. Needed more themes around the global community
3. Lack of involvement from key leaders in the church
4. Many interviews were cancelled
5. Lack of connection with the younger generation

Overview of the Campaign in General

The researcher's role was defined as facilitator and participant-observer. The pre-campaign meetings lasted several weeks, which led to the main meeting held on June 27, 2004. The total campaign involved interested church members, lay leaders, and people

interested in recruiting members of the congregation to take part in the Sunday sessions. The purpose encouraged potential leaders to develop skills on connecting folks to what it means to commit to a process.

Overview 1:1 – The Basics

The 1:1 basics were a major part of getting folks to participate in a process of continued conversations over a period of five to eight weeks. As noted in Appendix C, the first session was March 28, 2004. An agenda was generated for each session with specific subjects to be discussed. Ground rules were developed at each session to provide guidance for the one-on-one conversations. Phase One was the pre-campaign development phase, the most difficult process of the project. Several participants involved in this process began to realize the extensive work needed to get folks involved; this required more energy than expected. Several contextual associates became a little concerned about the lack of more people involved in the first phase. The pre-campaign recruitment was the most difficult process in the journey. The researcher became concerned that the level of commitment for such a project needed to be very high. Early in March, the contextual and professional associates provided advice on the planning process. Andrea Sheppard agreed to be our facilitator and to work with the contextual associates for assisting the presentations on Sundays. Andrea is employed with the Catholic Diocese of Boston, which supported the training of facilitators. Andrea attended Harvard Divinity School and trained facilitators on congregational development

throughout New England. The project began in May and continued until September 2004, according to the following timeline:

The timeline for the project included:

Phase One: Spiritual Development

A. Explanation of the sessions: **October-December 2004**

B. Faith Reflections on Sundays throughout the eight weeks

1. Week 1 Luke 10:30: Story of Mary
2. Week 2 Luke 8
3. Week 3 Jeremiah 29: Seeking the Welfare of the City
4. Week 4 1 Peter 2:49: "The Living Stones"

Phase Two: Relationship Building-Recruitment Campaign

A. Explanation of Session: Pre-Campaign for Congregational Development

B. Definition of One-on-one Training (Appendix F)

1. Conversation
2. Contend and Connection
3. Commitment
4. Facilitator's Training Sheet

C. Host Training: December 18 to February 2005

Phase Three: House Meeting Campaign (Appendices D-E)

A. Explanation of Session

B. Developed House Meetings (Agenda)

1. Issue Discussion: Getting Folks To Tell Their "Story"

2. Issue Prioritization---Three Major Issues for the Church and the Community; Next Steps: June 10, 2004

Phase Four: Small Group Rules

A. Follow your passion.

B. Accept responsibility.

C. Follow the law of two feet.

D. Whoever comes to the group are the right people.

E. Give everyone an opportunity to speak.

Our first session officially began on May 11, 2004, after the morning worship at 1:30 p.m. Seventy-five people attended our official first meeting. The first pre-campaign meeting coordinator was Sanyo Woodridge who helped organize this project. First, the contextual associates of Mount Calvary connected to learn more about how to rally the other members of the congregation.

The faith reflections noted in Appendix A through Appendix E became a starting point for each session to motivate the participants with a spiritual message. The eight sessions would be planned at Mount Calvary Baptist Church Fellowship Hall, 17 John

Street, Springfield, Massachusetts to allow members, lay folks, and new members to feel comfortable in their own church setting. Seventy-six participants engaged in the project. Most of the work was completed by the eight contextual associates.

The goals of the five to eight sessions were to challenge at least 300 new contacts from the many conversations. The contextual associates decided that a pre-test survey would not be suitable for a much older generation. So they got the word out on Sundays, talking to the congregation members one by one. The average age of a Mount Calvary Baptist Church member is sixty-five, so some people resisted the project at first.

On Sunday, March 24, a meeting was planned from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. The context associates and members were pleased that since many of the worshippers attended Sunday worship regularly at 10:45 a.m. that they would commit to a schedule. At each session, an agenda was established to continue with the specific outline of training. On March 4, 2004, the model was explained in detail with the understanding of encouraging more participants at the Sunday sessions. Participation in these sessions began to decline, Sunday by Sunday, however, as contextual associates and members were getting closer to June 27, 2005. Assignments were given to each contextual associate to prepare each document for each session.

During the pre-campaign phase, members were responsible for recruiting as many people as possible. The facilitator taught concepts that were created for the process of each of the session. After each session, the group provided a verbal evaluation. The evaluation included by the verbal response from the group, with three being the highest. After two weeks of gathering new people, the core of the program began. Each session was evaluated on the following criteria:

1. How did you like the session?
2. How well did you like the session?
3. How well did you like the interaction?

The sessions created energy and excitement and the attendance was constant and helpful over an eight-week period. Interaction was good, but follow up for future planning sessions was limited. Unfortunately, many of the older members seemed hesitant to voice opinions when the elders were present. As the sessions progressed, new and different people attended. Conversations would sometimes become personal and critical of the current leadership, and several contextual associates had to keep the group focused. The participants' input during the sessions provided the motivation to keep all members involved. The project generated practical application to each session, as participants were encouraged to follow through with specific tasks. Many people involved knew each other and shared experiences that extended beyond the sessions. At our final assembly meeting, we came together to record the issues raised and prioritize the agenda items from each session over a period of five to eight weeks. Table 1 is a summary of the issues realized during the June 2004 meeting. Ten groups participated and provided input on some of the issues important to the church, community, and programs of interest.

TABLE 1

CONTENT SUMMARY
ISSUES ASSEMBLY MATRIX OF CHANGES

CHURCH	COMMUNITY
FAMILY INVOLVEMENT PARENT INPUT Youth sports (basketball and baseball)	Gun control Controlling violence
Operational budget Pay off mortgage Improve front facility of church stairs	Blocking off church to sidewalk
Evangelism, young deacons Fellowship Local singing groups Ecumenical worship Tea and fundraiser events Improve hospitality	Reach out to Hispanic populations Church involvement in schools Devotional worship on Fridays nights

Members and contextual associates ranked each issue in order of priority. At each house meeting, folks prioritized each item, as shown in Appendix G.

The model for this project was structured in the following format: faith reflection documents, a chronological listing of focus group formats for each Sunday session, and training items. The project was divided into five phases, as follows: pre-campaign session, relationship-building campaign, post-campaign action, hosting meetings, and the assembly.

The pre-campaign phase is key to recruiting others to be part of the process. The pre-campaign format in Appendix A generated the face-to face conversations that were designed to probe the members of the congregation to see how interested they are in developing a purpose. From the first meeting to about the fourth, the number of participants began to drop off. Several team members had to regroup to reinforce the need for reflection, and to redirect the meaning of commitment, content, and our one-on-one's. Many of the leaders as well as the associate minister quit the project. Assignment and planning took its toll on the contextual associates and other participants. Many of the same people participated each week, as noted in Appendix C.

The campaign developed several leaders over a period of two months, ending on March 21, 2004. The face-to-face conversations were built on strong relationships and addressing issues important to all parties. Guidelines were established to provide specifics on what constitutes a one-on-one conversation (Appendix G) during the Sunday sessions. During early stages of the project, participants were responsible for encouraging members to attend and actively empower new leaders within the congregation.

The fourth phase was the house meetings. A house meeting is a small group of eight to twelve people invited to participate in small-group sessions, record their findings, and generate issues essential to the process. A training session is held on how to develop housing meetings, prior to this phase, and the details necessary for the process.

The purpose of the housing meetings is to discuss and prioritize issues for a common concern. This enabled Mount Calvary to work collaborative with others that were not members of our church. The twelve meetings were scheduled by twelve participants in the training sessions, who volunteered to invite four to five people to participate in a house discussion designated at a specific time and place. Facilitators were asked to chair one of the twelve meetings over a period of eight weeks, following the agenda outlined in Appendix C. The Mount Calvary house meeting training sessions were designed to facilitate involvement on discussing issues essential for the church and the community. The purpose of the house meetings is to focus on why participants are part of this process. The house meetings are key to the success of the project, which moves members and leaders into dialogue and reflection. Contextual associates were facilitators and hosts for the meetings and aggressively modeled the attributes of the project. At the end of the house meetings, a commitment sheet (Appendix E) was presented as a way of keeping the group focused and the process on track.

The facilitators' training sheet was presented as a way of outlining the duties of the facilitators, hosts, and house guests in preparation for the meetings. This process is key to the success of recruiting folks and discussing important issues each week, with the goal of narrowing the discussions to the top three issues of the church and the community.

All house meetings had a common agenda to discuss and prioritize issues for concern and change, as noted in Appendix H. The goal is to invite 300 contacts into a conversation on the desires and needs of the congregation.

Data Collection

Information from participants was collected over a period of several weeks. After the last session, many people either failed or refused to complete the interviews. Most of the interviews were held at Mount Calvary Baptist Church, although some folks preferred phone contact. Some members, particularly the older members, were afraid to speak out on issues and lead positive change. Anonymity was very important in the interview process.

Throughout this process, maintaining 300 people in all of the sessions and focusing on at least twelve to fifteen interviews was difficult because many people dropped out or didn't follow through with their commitment to being part of the process. The opportunity for people to speak freely was problematic because many members had relationships with certain leaders of the congregation. In addition, many of our key leaders work far away from the church during the week, which prohibited involvement and hindered motivation to change the "way things have always been." Unfortunately, many groups participated in activities important to their particular interest rather than working collectively on a program or activity. Four participants attended most of the Sunday sessions and enjoyed the interaction, but fail to be interviewed.

Data Analysis

Those involved in this process were people who attend Mount Calvary Baptist Church who provided the following answers to the questions. Participant one, a healthcare worker from Springfield, answered the following questions:

Question: What was your impression of the beginning of the project or building community?

> I was very excited about the project at the beginning, and especially wanted all the deacons and officers to get involved, because I was thinking if the officers got involved, then their wives and members would come one time, and then I hoped a large portion of each ministry would be involved. I especially liked the 1:1 because that way you get to know each other and understand each other's ways and actions.

Question: What did you learn, and how did it bring about change?

> The spiritual and social change was small because we never got enough members to participate. I enjoyed having Andrea come each week to teach us step after step how to improve our relationships as a church family, to improve activities for our children and young people. We are now in the process of organizing a hospitality committee.

Question: What was your impression of the leaders' involvement in building relationships?

> I do not think they totally enjoyed the meetings. They saw the white person involved in the training sessions, and I believe the chairperson of the Deacon Board and others have some problems with them. We are a church and we are God's children, so I do not understand. We have been trying to change.

Participant one shared her feelings on the Sunday sessions:

> I enjoyed the sessions. I wish there was more participation, but we tried for months and more people should have come.

Participant one shared her impression of the house meetings:

> Well, I did not make all of them, but I made a couple of them. People who came shared their opinions without having leaders such as trustees. In addition, deacons were pressured so they were not free to talk. No one did anything. No follow-up. No leaders came forward, and some felt it was the leaders' job to help with change and issues.

Participant two, a hospital emergency room staff member, shared what she learned and how this brought about change and good relationships:

> I learned that meeting people in our congregation that I really did not know on a personal level brought me out of my comfort zone, so to speak. It truly tested my faith and made me truly realize that in God there is no failure. We have the victory. No matter how small our input was, at our congregation meetings, it all means, "no man is an island." We all need each other for building and uplifting God's kingdom. We must keep the faith that all unanswered prayer is to help us always be faithful. We all must remember to love one another as God loves us.

Participant two shared her impression of the beginning of the project:

> I thought we as a church would never get together and jell, so to speak. But all in all I think we did fair; I don't believe if we had all attempt to understand the concept of building community or pioneer Valley Project it would have been truly a successful venture, but as the meetings went on I think it took. As for myself, I thought it was a beautiful vision.

Participant three, a federal government worker, who works with young people in the church, shared what she learned and how it brought about change:

> I learned that in order to go forth with changes you have to work with those that you have and pray that others will see and hear about what you are doing and will come on board to voice and work with the changes.

Participant three answered the question: What was your impression at the beginning of the project?

> The sessions were intense, and my thought was this would make a good strategic planning project for the church. The absence of the younger generation and communication limited some of the process. If we have good ideas, but no one to implement them, it is impossible. It was good to see something happening. It has been years since Mount Calvary has done anything new.

Participant four, an older member who supports the Sunday school, shared her experiences of the project:

> I do think we came into it and brought the church together, and brought out new leadership. Not to call any names, but two of our members, never before in twenty-five years had an opportunity to express themselves. As times go on, when pain happens in Mt. Calvary, when you're asked to grow, you're afraid to. When you're in the comfort zone for so long, it is hard to know because we have not had a pastor for a long time.

Participant five, a nurse, expressed how change is possible as a result of the project:

> Oh, yes, Mrs. [redacted] demonstrated growth and getting involved. People who have not had anything to do in years got involved, even if they came to a meeting after church on Sunday. That is something and that is change, for me. I saw a lot of good things. People who haven't talked to one another in years in a setting like that. People you meet in the group had some of the same ideas and vision.

Participant six, a retired worker from a local hospital, shared her comments and concerns about the issues and how he/she would play a role in change:

> With all the time and energy that was put into the project, many came for the food, and many rejected the idea of change. The leaders have been in the church a long time, and it was a nice meeting. The project can work with committed persons. Must have a starting point and I think once we get the younger generation it will work out.

Participant six answered the question: What was your impression of leader involvement in the project?

> Really, you don't want my opinion about the lay leaders.

Participant seven, who worked in a firm as assistant chair of a trustee, shared in his own words:

> Oh, yes, I think about the program and what I learned. I learned to think about something different and get involved in the church. I joined the pastoral relations committee, and the more people get involved, the church will motivate

> forward. A lot of people don't want to do, anything, don't want to get involved. I am just one man. I am afraid I can't make all the meetings. I look to get people to visit the session. If people would come, they will change because I changed. I felt the same way at one time; I didn't want to get involved. People would make comments that would hurt, but I kept on going. The sessions were great and they helped me a great deal. One thing I want to say: the biblical session was very good because it helped me have reason to be in this class. I thought at first it would be too much for me to handle. The one-on-one session helped me get to know people and little bit better.

Participant eight answered the question: Where do you see the future leadership of the church?

> It takes people to be involved to move the church in the right direction. The way I see it, people do much taking, but they do nothing. Some people need to be involved. But I am willing to get involved after the sessions.

Participant nine, a case worker with the state of Massachusetts, shares the following words:

> I enjoyed the part about getting in the community. This says to me I'm on the right path, for the work I do in the community on the condition of youth. Today I sometimes counsel boys and girls hanging out near their Eastern Avenue home. We need to understand why they are in this situation. It may be that their mother is not doing well as a parent or their father is absent. We want them to be a man, but they don't have an example to look at.

Participant nine answered the question: What are your thoughts on issues brought forward in the housing meetings session?

> I thought what was good was that we come together for all other events like funerals, cookouts, and special activities, and when we come together it is a good thing. This old traditional church is set in their ways and hard to change. It will die if it does not change for the positive. This is what this program demonstrated to me. We had so many issues, but many people that were not present at the session could not share. It seems that they need to participate or make an judgment before they visit the sessions.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to demonstrate how relationships are important and the need for more cooperation in a process of developing leaders and lay folks into a mutual need to create more relationships within the congregation. The opening sections of this chapter provided an explanation and the complications of this type of research design and it measurement. The recruitment campaign engaged congregates into a group dialogue and assembly to address important issues in the community and the church. The steps to be taken were as follows: encouraged contextual associates, create a model of the dynamics of change, pre-campaign, relationship-building campaign, post-campaign action, and house meetings. This process encouraged more lay leaders to take a greater interest in the life of the church and gain confidence to communicate despite a limited ability to encourage change due to the lack of trust in the congregation. This process serves as a solid way to learn more about the social context of the congregation.

The final section described the field experience through interviews with faithful folks of the Mount Calvary Baptist Church in a time of building relationship and change. The significant aspect of this area is the need for relationships of folks being in the process for development and learning. The attempt to change behavior is complicated but the process proved to be worthwhile. More group dynamics is essential for an aging traditional congregation, and more spiritual development is needed as new leaders grow to understand the need to rotate leadership over the years.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

The theme of the focus group in which this project took place was the Urban Development and Intercultural Communication. The focus of the group is bringing communities and organizations into proper relationships of unity and harmony so that urban African American churches can endure.

In our society where resistance to change is a constant force in congregations, businesses, and every facet of life, one must acknowledge that the possibility of change is a tremendous personal and professional cost. Even though teaching others about change is problematic, it is a worthy effort. The Mount Calvary Baptist Church community took a journey inward to see what can be done to improve what God has given it. During this journey, the community realized that relationships must be valued because people are the true leaders of the church, and we all need to embrace the power of the Gospel in good times and times of indifference. The more the researcher was involved, the more it became imperative that some change was necessary.

Ministry is about change, relationships, struggles, challenges, and beyond. It is because this researcher believes in the quality of life that he cares about those who communicate, listen, and take people seriously. The complexities of ministry in the twenty-first century are about being perceptive to acquiring skills to address those areas of relationship building essential to church and community in an urban ministry. In retrospect, no matter how well one can preach, teach, and increase funding for some

specific purposes, leaders must continue to develop among themselves, as well as become effective motivators of the sacred trust of those who depend on effective ministries and programs.

Implementing other leaders and members into a doctoral project fostered growth and courage. The ability to help others develop is a fundamental idea for any group or organization, and it is a worthwhile effort in spite of difficulties. This allows time for reflection, study, research, and helping others think differently. This model was not built without a lot of emotional and personal reluctance simply due to addressing the issues presented. Throughout the process, however, a mutual bonding took place, and many new relationships were developed. Those who participated shared life stories, fears, and victories in what God has done and is doing. The researcher reflects on author Carlyle Fielding Stewart, III, in his book, *Reclaiming What Was Lost,* when he says:

> Investment also suggests a willingness to be used by the Holy Spirit to make the church better than we found it by improving its quality of life. Too often, we simply find ourselves maintaining the status quo. While maintaining a church is better than making it worse, a more beneficial approach would be to transform the church through a personal investment of time, intellect, talent, and resources.[65]

So often, the work of the church falls within the clergy or other people with special gifts and talents. When the work of transformation and liberation is at hand, however, all people should be partakes of something new and different for the kingdom of God. Many folks see themselves as a congregation of individuals working in a comfort zone of influence. The "emotional wounds" may never cease, but continue from generation to generation.

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[65] Carlyle Fielding Stewart, III, *Reclaiming What Was Lost* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 73.

The researcher is reminded of those words from 1 Corinthians, chapter 13:

> If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. In addition, if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1 Cor. 13:1-4).

Future leaders in the black conservative church must begin to reflect upon the narratives of black theology, scripture, and creative opportunities for dialogue and interaction with folks. Folks in the pew need their voices heard, and to be reflective and bring opportunities for making decisions in their congregations. The more this researcher has been exposed to the plight of the project and congregation, the more he realized that the sacred leader of the gospel is our liberation and teacher in these times of complex issues and concerns of the local church.

In the book, *The Theology of the Cross for the 21st Century,* by Alberto L. Garcia and A. R. Victor Raj, the authors assert:

> Black theology in United States begins with suffering and minor key moaning: the "torture tombs of slave ships," the experience of branded servitude, lynching, church-burning, non-suffrage, Jim Cow, second-class citizenship. Their way of speaking about God begins as a sung theology, feelings expressed by weeping exiles in psalms of deep lament, yearning for home, for Zion, for African.[66]

As the researcher reflects upon the question, "what does it means to black and Christian in this global society?" he realizes that some folks may meet this unique

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[66] John Nunes, *The Theology of the Cross for the 21th Century, The African American and the Theology of the Cross,* eds. Alberto L. Garcia and A. R. Victor Raj (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Press, 2002), 217.

challenge to be black and Christian. The late Dr. Samuel D. Proctor offered this compelling, compassionate, and comprehensive perspective:

> We face the challenge of being both black and Christian at the same time, bearing our own burden of oppression while helping others to be relieved of theirs; we are faced with drying our own tears of frustration and failure while drying the tears of others; here we are struggling to overcome our won estrangement and marginality while trying to create a blessed community out of (the) polarization, tribalism, and xenophobia that surround us. We are indeed the wounded healer .We are the victims of wanton hatred while calling others to selfless love. We are falling under the weight of our own crosses while being called on to help shoulder the cross of someone else. Black and Christian! We are called to each of our brothers to be positive, constructive, and nonviolent, while they are victims of denial, benign neglect, and violence.[67]

In a society where change and relationships are problematic, there is a Christology that addresses the care of who a people are. In an urban intercultural communication society, it is difficult among those who speak the "King's English," rather than bridging the gap of dialogue and reflection. Congregations in our society struggle with intercultural communication and diversity that is so widespread.

With respect to this project, the researcher is reminded of the term "life cycle of a congregation." Robert Dale describes some concepts vital to these life cycles. He assures that the life cycle of a congregation is much like the steps and stages we might think of in our own human life cycle.[68] The researcher uses examples of stages in human development by stating a parallel of the individual. He provides the following levels of growth: infant, toddler, child, adolescent, and young adult.

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[67] Ibid., 218.

[68] Robert Dale, *To Dream Again: How to Make Your Church Come Alive* (Louisville, KY: Broadman Press, 1981).

The author suggests that the congregations go through a period of life cycles and lists the following stages unique to this project for this researcher. The first stage is dream. Dream is the vision of what could be possible. The next stage is belief. Beliefs are the critical core values that keep the community alive, the ability to practice what the organization stands for. These are the concepts that will help the congregation live out the dream. These are the core-shared concepts that help people in community share their concerns and desires. This is a way to bring critical opportunities for change and new ideas. The next stage is goals and structure. This is the concept of helping the congregation have a vision for setting goals in an effort to bring about community. This is a stage of high energy where people are working in relationship to realize the dream. This is an important point of this life cycle as the fulfillment of a dream realized.

When the stages of ministry are reached, the goal is accomplished. The energy of hope is available and people are ready for action.[69]

The most important aspect of this life cycle is the power of ministry and provisioning and restructuring relationships. What is God asking of the people? In addition, what is the next step? Strong leadership helps folks realize that provisioning is moving with the word of God and making sure that nostalgia is an opportunity to move forward and make a difference. In other words, leaders and members need to risk moving beyond the concern of hope and seek ways for future leadership. Old ways are good when there is no new fresh idea for building relationships.

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[69] Gilbert R. Rendle, *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for* Leaders (Washington, DC: The Alban Institute, 1998), 136.

In a January 27, 2005, lecture entitled "Issues in 21st Century Leadership, Phase V Core Course, United Theological Seminary," Dr. G. Edwin Zeiders assures:

> Traditional congregations are defined as local churches that primarily express their life with a focus upon membership, money, and maintenance. These congregations repeat the same patterns repeatedly. They are predictable, usually stable, but often dying a slow death. Such congregations focus more upon the past and constantly remember the way things once were. Here the emphasis is upon volunteering, maintaining committees, and repeating the usual programs year after year with essentially the same people involved.[70]

In spite of the challenge for building relationships and group study and dialogue, change is always a difficult process. Changing the way a people think and act is not easy. Relationships are hard when it comes to developing leaders for service. Relationships do not happen because of change and the leadership. Leaders and members need to do the hard work to continue the process of communication and think about their future. Leaders need to model positive relationships in the church setting.

Carlyle Fielding Stewart, III, in his book, *Reclaiming What Was Lost: Recovering Spiritual Vitality in the Mainline Church*, he assures in his chapter on reclaiming the importance of the black church:

> Collaborative models of ministry do work well in black churches. This in no way means to obviate the role of laity in shaping the direction and destiny of black congregations. Healthy churches develop partnerships or covenants between pastors and laity. However, I am referring to the general culture of contempt that permeates black churches' view of pastors and pastoral authority. The pastor in many of those churches is not a true spiritual leader or religious servant of the Lord, but a peon functionary who takes orders from laity who don't know the word of God nor are under the influence of the Holy Ghost! The black church is

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[70] Dr. G. Edwin Zeiders, "Reshaping the Clay," Doctor of Ministry Intensive, United Theological Seminary, January 27, 2005, lecture.

> not only a spiritual life center but also a life center in African American communities.[71]

As the researcher concludes this section, Galatians 6:17 says, "from now on, let no one make trouble for me; for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body." The local church has invested into hope, courage, and commitment, but relationships are the key to success. This requires working through conflict, new ideas, and challenges. Sometimes it hurts and it requires courage in the face of the unknown. It will also require scars of hope and justice. James Alfred Smith, Sr., in the chapter entitled, "The Scars of Ministry," of his book, *Speak Until Justice Wakes*, assures:

> Likewise, all who follow Jesus, including those who pastor God's people, will have scars on their souls to show that, like Jesus who called them, they have been wounded by many of the same people they have tried to assist, to bless, to coach, to direct, to encourage, to fertilize with the faith, to guide, to help, to inform, and to inspire. Scars are visible symbols that some people are out to demoralize, defame, defeat, and destroy those who seek to utter a prophetic word.[72]

Those congregations and leaders who continually strive to bring about transformation will always been effective. It is important to have an intercultural communication perspective as one addresses the issues of change and growth.

Summary

This section provided an explanation of the design as well as highlights of how folks would response to an extensive series of specific sessions addressing the issues of

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[71] Carlyle Fielding Stewart, III, *Reclaiming What Was* Lost (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 103-104.

[72] James Alfred Smith, Sr., *Speaks Until Justice Wakes: Prophetic Reflections From J.Alfred Smith Sr.,* ed. Jini M. Kilgore (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2006), 13.

change and relationships, as well as the opportunity to converse with folks and develop a common vision. Increased involvement of the core project team, as well as prayer and commitment are essential throughout the process. One of the contextual associates said, "I don't believe it will work; people are set in their ways."

Connecting to something new and different is always problematic if nothing has been tested for more than twenty-five years. The participants demonstrated greatness in the face of discouragement among church members and lay leaders. To be a healthy leader in a process of moving to enhancing relationships within the church, one must bring about healthy relationships that improve the overall effectiveness of the congregation in the daily and operational outlook of the congregation.

This project identified the needs for change through building relationships, using an eight-week campaign to produce new leaders and improved working relationships. The diversity has become so diversified that relationships can be a problematic, and in some cases, a never-ending process. For more than eighty-six years the congregation of Mount Calvary Baptist Church has maintained the fellowship and embraced the oral traditions, which are deeply rooted in the heart and spirit of the faithful.

The researcher believes the church covenant has been read more than one thousand and thirty two times in the church's eighty-year history. The church covenant is the Black Baptist catechesis with a focus of discipline, order, and instruction. Dr. William C. Turner, Jr., pastor of Mount Level Missionary Baptist Church and associate professor of the practice of homiletics at the Duke University Divinity School, asserts:

> Life is not meant to be lived in isolation or by individuals whose only goal is to do their own thing. If we rear our children that way, they will not be able to cope with the crises they shall surely face. Living as God intends is more than

> being surrounded by mother, father, and children. It is more than being in a circle of blood relations. It takes a community to rear children and to give them the spiritual resources for living productive lives that bring the glory of God.[73]

However, a special convent that is deeply rooted in relationships runs at the core of what the New Testament speaks of as Koinonia fellowship.

Because of the continuing strength of the African-American church, custom, and religious tradition, slavery has had a major impact on segregation, and yet, the African-American tradition remains strong. Although slavery was an evil injustice, the struggle of pain and forgiveness is, and continues to be, a theme of the church. For this researcher, African-American literature can bind the demons of mistrust and release the forgiveness that is essential to the healing process. In the chapter entitled, "The Spirit of Liberation" in *Down, Up, and Over,* Dr. Dwight Hopkins asserts:

> In this believing of those without access to resources to live their full humanity, we discover a faith to act on the covenantal promise of Yahweh. The doctrine of liberation for those who believe and act on this faith: faith in liberation from personal and collective demons and for the practice of freedom in a new God-centered self and life.[74]

Findings

The underlying assumption is that a lack of teamwork and organizational development has put out the light in the congregation. The church has longed to appreciate the development of its leaders, and to completely and holistically understand each other as leaders and lay folks. It is clear that the opportunities for more study in this

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[73] William J. Turner, *Discipleship for African American Christians: Journal through the Church Covenant* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2002), 131-132.

[74] Dwight Hopkins, *Down, Up, And Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology* (Minneapolis, St Paul: Fortress Press, 2000), 161.

area of reflection and dialogue are vital to the congregation's leadership. The uniqueness of this project was to engage new ideas on the part of old, young, and middle-aged members of the congregation.

The research is an approach to congregational development for leaders in the African-American context in an effort to address issues in the community and the church. The researcher's belief and premise is that a congregation is always developing, exploring, and learning how to meet the challenges in an urban intercultural communication society. This, then, led to an investigation of the themes and meaning for the traditional black church in our global society. The uniqueness of this project was the concern for social interaction for specific outcomes.

The idea for such a project was generated by reading the works of Dr. Carl Dudley. His book, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook,* was a good place to start. Dudley asserts, "Theology can be the springboard for spiritual renewal and revitalization of a congregation." The researcher's motivation came from the book *Saving Souls, Saving Society,* by Dr. Heidi Unruh. He asserts:

> Congregates need to seek new opportunities for learning without following old rules. This assumption helped to explore ways of addressing the issue of change with the ability to reflect, connect, and decide and to do.[75]

During the course of this project, the following discoveries emerged for the researcher. First, the researcher is clearly convinced that the project is a valuable tool for assessing the issues of behavior, commitment, and responsiveness.

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[75] Heidi Rolland Unruh, *Saving Souls, Saving Society: The Role of Evangelism in Church-Based Social Ministries.* Proceedings at the Religious Research Association in Boston, Massachusetts, November 6, 1999, by Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Second, the support of grassroots, non-profit agencies is helpful in understanding the community in which the congregation is functioning. Grassroots organizations can support the church on reaching out to the wider community.

Third is the effort to continue moving the congregation toward connectedness and engaging the issues of the church and community while appreciating the struggle and the difficulty for moving toward change. One of the dilemmas of this project was that leading change in a congregation naturally engages negative and angry feelings. As the anxiety rises, it becomes focused, and people are either able to identify what they fear or refuse to participate in the process. Some people distance themselves from the congregation by leaving quietly to avoid further discomfort. Table 2 reveals the deep concerns from some faithful members who wrestled with the reality of change.

TABLE 2
SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES

Type of Changes	The Church	Lay Leaders	Community	Hopeful Changes	
Dialogue Communication	Enjoyed the (1:1) portion	Deacons and officers getting involved	We had nothing to do in years	No follow-up on issues	x
Commitment	Enjoyed the meetings It will die if it does not change	We never got enough members to participate	"old traditional church set in its ways"	x	x
Content	Improve our relationships as a church family	Brought me out of my comfort zone		x	x
Opportunity for Leadership	Thought we would never jell	Board members did not come to sessions	Absence of children and young people input	x	x
Church Involvement/ Resistance to Change	"They saw the white person involved in the training	We need training	No follow up, no leaders came forward and some felt it was the pastor's job to make changes	x	x

Fourth, the researcher revealed nine group responses from participants that were highlighted reflections, which provided input to participants' lack of understanding, recommendations, and steps toward more involvement. The direct contact with participants and context associates enhances the researcher's ability to continue to address issues and gather information for more informed knowledge and learning. The project provided an opportunity to observe the interaction of constituents and participants outside normal church-related activities. One factor that heightened the emotions was the view of fear. Fear is a driving force among congregations when it comes to change. It has long been recognized that fear paralyzes organizations as much as it paralyzes individuals. If congregation leaders are responsible for motivating and coordinating a process of change, then leaders need the discernment to understand and cope with fear that could paralyze a congregation.

Some of our leaders felt that traditions play a more important role due to the bias informative training materials. This concern is legitimate. Traditional (conservative African-American) churches can and sometimes resist instruction from other educational or denomination training consultants.

Finally, developing new relationships will take time. The excitement of this project is hopeful when the perception and assumptions can be explored. This process provided implementation for more training in the areas of discipleship, evangelism, and the church administration. While critically analyzing those concepts and issues, progressive spiritual and social change takes place; therefore, the changing dynamics of the urban challenge raises two challenges: (1) the work of congregational development

with a conservative African-American church must be motivated with spiritual integrity, (2) more training needs to be administered for program development and church growth, and (3) the rotation of leaders must be a constant renewal.

There also needs to be an explicit covenant of friendly coordination and execution in the practice of the ministry, and a formula for meeting the internal concerns of the lay leadership and ministers. Table 3 is a compilation of the interviews and responses from members of the congregation who shared their experiences over the course of this project.

TABLE 3
APPLIED SOLUTION DYNAMIC OF CHANGE

Obstacles	Causes	Opportunities	Remedies
Limited outreach to new lay leadership Lay leaders are disengaged Lay leaders limited new ideas Church lacks clear vision	Programs are honored among groups Change viewed as distrust No link between change and mission Change is rejection of traditional values Leaders limit dialogue within the church; they do not allow discussions for fear of reprisal	More support from church members to encourage lay leaders Monitor progress Train lay leaders Ensure members and lay elders understand how their spiritual covenant and duties in the church are important Tracked with responsible lay leaders	Visible trust with a promise covenant A constant biblical respect for how fear, feelings, and emotions can decrease the opportunity for addressing the issues of change and mission Increased pastoral staff growth

TABLE 3 (CONT.)
APPLIED SOLUTION DYNAMIC OF CHANGE

Obstacles	Causes	Opportunities	Remedies
Certain leaders want to protect the church Church lacks agility Organization is trapped in "We've never done it that way before"	Members don't ask questions for fear of leadership Lay leaders are slow to capture changes only when it comes to facilities or church property but lacks vision for evangelism and seeking solid mission objectives Visionary ideas are presented, but it takes months or years to get any workable solution (resistance is a major problem)	Pastor is employed by the church, not the spiritual leader of the church. The deacons are in charge of the church and spiritual matters Young adult ministries are too expensive	New leaders in key areas of the church New worship to focus on young adults and Spanish culture Move beyond African American-only ideas Music must speak to all generations

When there is a mission for the service in the ministry of the church, and relationships are firm, positive things can happen. Social interaction is needed among the congregation, and key leaders need to envision transformation of change among the congregation. The researcher believers that when the inner core leadership along with pastoral oversight is spiritually involved or taking interest as a collective team, a new synergy can emerge. Then, transformation becomes a reality for more involved relationships in the community and local church.

Working with congregations is always an exciting challenge. To keep focused and encourage those who rust in their work is a true commitment to each other. Much soul is required on the part of all participants in this process, which requires time, commitment and dedication.

APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTION TO CAMPAIGN

Congregational Development – Pre-Campaign Training

Welcome and Purpose	**Pastor**	(1 minute)
Faith Reflection	**Pastor**	(7 minutes)
Overview of 1:1 Campaign – *What? Why?*	**Ms. Mells**	(4 minutes)
Purpose, Goals, Timeline of Action		
(questions to clarify)		
One-on-One Training	**Andrea**	(25 minutes)
1:1 Review		
Overview Agenda of 1st Campaign Meeting and		
Discussion of Meeting Roles, Theme, and Visuals		
Congregational Planning – *When, Where? How?*	**Andrea**	(30 minutes)
Preparing for the Final Week and Campaign Kick-off:		
Sunday, January 18, – Church Hall		

Accountability of 1:1 Goals – Weekly Pre-Campaign Goals (#1:1s done, # of campaign commitments)

- How are your 1:1s doing?
- What are people's responses to the campaign?

Expanding Your Initial 1:1 List
Group list – Does your team have a database contact list?

Turnout Plan – Call for turnout 1 week before the 11th and 1 day before the 17th (campaign kick-off)

Spreading the Word

- Announcements in Media (bulletin, newsletter, church service announcements…)
- Sermons
- Testimonies in the Congregation
- A Team standing in the Back of the Church for Conversation Sign-ups

Preparation of Materials for the Campaign Kick-off (see attached sheet): theme, visuals, 1:1 goals, roles

Decide date of next gathering?

Next Steps	**Pastor**	(5 minutes)
Continue to Develop Your 1:1 Lists and		

Work on Your Weekly 1:1 Goals

Use worship services wisely with announcements, testimonies, reminder fliers, and sign-up list.

Meet today if possible to further determine roles and materials as a team for the kick-off meeting.

Commit to bringing two to three other people (not in the room today) with you next Sunday.

Invite as many as possible to the kick-off!

Announcements Ms. Perry **(2 minutes)**
PVP Announcements and
Mt. Calvary Announcements

Evaluation Ms. Williams **(8 minutes)**

- One word about how you are feeling.
- Why you said your word.
- What went well?
- What can we improve?

Closing Mr. Williams **(2 minutes)**

APPENDIX B

SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

JEREMIAH 29:1-13

Week 1

"Seek the Welfare of the City and Find Welfare"

Week 2

ACTS 2:1-4

"Reflections on Pentecost"

Week 3

1 PETER 2:4-9

"The Living Stones"

Week 4

JOHN, CHAPTER 11

"Lazarus Raised From the Dead"

The question for each week throughout the project is: "How do the biblical stories contribute to the dynamics of change and building relationships?"

APPENDIX C

RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS

Dynamics of Change
1:1 Relationship-Building Campaign Evaluation
(1 hour and 15 minutes)

Welcome and Purpose (3 minutes)
Faith Reflection (7 minutes)
Campaign Overview (5 minutes)
Week-by-Week Summary and Review of Accomplishments
Mini 1:1s (8 minutes)
Campaign Evaluation (35 minutes)
Small Group Discussion
What went well in the campaign? What could be improved? (15 minutes)
What lessons/insights do we take from the campaign about the parish-community and ourselves?

Large Group Debrief (20 minutes)
Debrief what was shared in the small groups.
Did we accomplish our goals?
Did we develop and deepen relationships? Did we develop new leadership?
Did we strengthen the parish-community?
Did the campaign result in more energy and people power for the next steps?

Next Steps (15 minutes)
Proposal and Discussion about Next Steps for Action

Announcements (2 minutes)
Evaluation of Today's Meeting – 10 minutes after today's meeting
Other announcements for the Church or PVP…

Closing (1 minute)

APPENDIX D

HOUSE MEETING

House Meetings

Purpose of the Meeting

1. To discuss and prioritize issues of common concern for the people of the Mount Calvary Church and Community

The congregation is also a member of the Pioneer Valley Project, which is an organization of twenty-five plus member institutions in the Springfield area committed to social justice. **We are in the process of identifying issues to take action on in the church and in the community by June 2004.**

2. To identify other leaders in the church and community

3. To test our ability as members of Mount Calvary to facilitate meetings, to turn out people for meetings, and to identify and build relationships

Mount Calvary House Meeting Campaign

The Mount Calvary House Meeting Campaign is to discuss and prioritize issues of common concern for the church and community. We want to identify issues to take action on in the fall or summer of 2004. A house meeting is a small group of eight to twelve people whom you know and would like to be invited to discuss issues. This is an opportunity to build relationships. Each meeting has a common agenda to discuss and prioritize issues for concern and change.

- The campaign will run from Sunday, May 23, through June 27, 2004
- Twelve house meetings in eight weeks
- Twelve hosts and at least six facilitators
- Two to three house meetings per week for eight weeks

The campaign will involve **100 conversations at Mount Calvary Baptist Church,** who are all invited to a process meeting and to get involved.

The campaign will end with an **Issues Assembly on Sunday, June 27, 2004.**

House Meeting Agenda

1 hour and 40 minutes

Welcome and Purpose **(5 minutes)**

Introduce yourself, the host, and your role as facilitator and explain the purpose of the meeting.

Introductions **(10 minutes)**

Ask everyone to say his or her name, where he or she is from, and number of years in the church or community.

Issue Focusing **(1 minute)**

Ask people to think about their lives and in which areas they feel most passionate about creating change (work, housing, children's education/day care, health care, street, neighborhood, church).

Mini 1:1s **(10 minutes)**

Ask people to turn to the person next to them or find someone they do not know and share their thoughts from the previous question.

Issue Discussion **(44 minutes)**

Lead a discussion with everyone, sharing issues and interests for action and change.

- Turning big, general problems into specific issues for action
- Getting people to share personal stories of why they care about this issue

22 minutes for each discussion:

1. **Church** – A discussion with people sharing their issues and interests for action/change in the Mount Calvary Church and Community.

2. **Community** – A discussion of issues and interests for action/change in the community.

Issue Prioritizing **(24 minutes)**

Lead the group in prioritizing their top three out of all the issues they mentioned. Of all these issues, what do you feel the most passionate about in working for change, and why? Ask everyone to rank them on their paper and read "1, 2, and 3" as you write on the chart. Rank the top three vote getters. Ask, "Of the top three issues, which do you feel is most feasible, and why?

12 minutes to prioritize each category of issues:

1. **Church** – Of all these issues, what do you feel the most passionate about in working toward?

   - Change and why? Ask everyone to rank and read "1, 2, 3" from their papers.
   - Rank the top three.
   - Of these top three issues, which do you feel is the most feasible and why?

2. **Community** – Of all these issues, what do you feel the most passionate about in working for change, and why?

   - Ask everyone to rank and read "1, 2, 3" from their papers.
   - Rank the top three.
   - Of these top three issues, what do you feel is the most feasible and why?

Next Steps **(5 minutes)**

Commitment sheet – Issue Assembly, Campaign Check-In,
Host a House Meeting, Parish Groups

Closing **(1 minute)**

Thank them and "wrap it up"

Snacks, Socializing, and Evaluation (10 minutes after meeting with the host)

APPENDIX E

HOUSE MEETING COMMITMENT SHEET

Commitment Sheet

_____**Yes, I am interested in being a *host* for the house meeting campaign.**
I am interested in hosting one house meeting in my home, which involves getting eight to twelve people (friends, family, neighbors in church and community) to discuss and prioritize issues of concern for our church.

_____**Yes, I am interested in being a *facilitator* for the house campaign.**
I am interested in facilitating two meetings during the campaign, which involves leading discussions of issues and action priorities and helping to identify potential new leaders in the church and community by attending the meetings.

_____**Yes, I am interested in being a *participant* in the house meeting campaign.**
I am interested in participating in a house meeting at my home to discuss and prioritize issues of concern for action.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____

PHONE NUMBER: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS:_____

APPENDIX F

ONE-ON-ONE FACILITATORS AND HOST TRAINING

One-on-One Training

Conversation

- An equal exchange
- Not an interview (or one-way questioning)

Content and Connection

- Beyond chit-chat
- Connection to our stories and values
- Asking the "why" question about our interests and life choices
- (C "choice points") to connect deeper to what we value and why

Commitment

- Asking for a commitment beyond the one-on-one meeting (e.g. another 1:1, attending a meeting, a leadership role in an organization)
- Working together in a future, shared action
- Beyond a conversational exchange
- To actually creating a relationship with a shared past, present, and future and combine our shared interests and resources
- Commit to broadening the vision

Relational Understanding and Power to Act

Think of people you know in the church and community. Who would you like to see participate in the campaign and our future work?

_____

_____

How many "outside 1:1s" will you commit to do before the end of the campaign? ____

Names: _____

_____

Facilitators' Sheet

Roles and Responsibilities of the Facilitator

Facilitate the Meeting with a Prepared Agenda and Supplies

1. **Welcome and Purpose**
   Introduce yourself and your role as facilitator and explain the purpose of the meeting.

2. **Introductions**
   Ask everyone to say his or her name and his or her street.

3. **Issue Focusing**
   Ask people to think about their lives and in which areas they feel most passionate about creating change (work, housing, children's education/daycare, healthcare, street, neighborhood, church).

4. **Mini 1:1s**
   Ask people to turn to the person next to them or find someone they do not know and share their thoughts from the previous question.

5. **Issue Discussion**
   Lead a discussion with everyone sharing their issues and interests for action and change.

   - Turning big, general problems into specific issues for action
   - Getting people to share personal stories of *why* they care about this issue

6. **Issue Prioritizing**
   Lead the people in the group in prioritizing their top three issues of all the issues they mentioned.
   - Ask, "Of all the issues, what do you feel most passionate about in working for change, and why?" Ask everyone. Rank the top three vote getters.
   - Ask, "Of these top three issues, which do you feel is most feasible and why?"

7. **Next Steps**
   - Commitment Sheet
   - Issue Assembly
   - Campaign Check-In
   - Hosting a House Meeting
   - Organizational Meetings

8. **Closing**
   Thank them and "wrap it up"

9. **Snacks and Socializing**

10. **Evaluation with the Host**

Making Sure Everyone is Heard During the Meeting

How do you make sure everyone contributes?

- Periodically remind the group we want to hear from everyone,
- Thank the very talkative ones for contributions and remind the group we want to hear from everyone.
- Call on people, who are not speaking,
- Ask Jim to share more about what he said if another person says, "Jim said….."

Identifying Potential Leaders During the Meeting

Question: How do you identify potential leaders during the meeting? (Qualities)

Answer: Those who have brought others with them, are participating, are helping turn big problems into specific issues or helping the group prioritize issues, are both talking and listening, and making commitments to participate after the meeting.

Evaluating the Meeting With the Host After the Meeting

Host Training Sheet

Roles and Responsibilities of the Host

1. Identify people for turnout.
    - You are the organizer of the house meeting.
    - You do the turnout for the meeting and have the meeting in your home.

    Whom can you invite?

    - Family, friends, neighbors, church members, co-workers
    - Anybody with a stake in the congregation and community

2. Set a date, time, and location for your house meeting.

3. Invite people to come to your house meeting.

    - 1:1s, phone calls, invitation in the mail
    - Person-to-person is best --- don't just rely on a mailing

    What do you say to invite the people?

    - A gathering to discuss issues and interests for change in the church and community.
    - Make sure they understand why they are coming and that their input is valuable.

    When should you invite them and remind them about the meeting?

    - Two to three weeks before your meeting – give them time to arrange their schedule.
    - Send an invitation in the mail, after you have talked to them.
    - Call to remind them about the meeting one week before and one day before.

4. Prepare refreshments and the meeting space.

    - Prepare some snacks for after the meeting (less than a meal, but more than five cookies).
    - Arrange the room so that participants can see each other, the flip chart, and the wall space for the charts. Consider where to hand the charts.

5. Identify potential leaders during the meeting.

Question: How do you identify potential leaders during the meeting? **(Qualities)**

Answer: Those who have brought others with them, are participating, are helping turn big problems into specific issues or helping the group to prioritize issues, are both talking and listening, make commitments to participate after the meeting.

6. Evaluate the meeting with the facilitator after the meeting.

7. Follow up with meeting participants for next steps.

Invite the participants to follow-up with their commitments by reminding them of the Campaign meetings, the Issues Assembly, and hosting a house meeting.

APPENDIX G

ISSUE ASSEMBLY CONCERNS

Top Three Issues of Concern

What are the top three issues about which you feel most passion/energy to act on change in the church? Why? (Number one is the issue you feel the strongest about.)

1_____

2_____

3_____

Rank these issues from 1-3, for feasibility, with number 1 being the most doable

1_____

2_____

3_____

Of the top three issues for action in the church, which is the most feasible/do-able?

_____

Why?

_____

APPENDIX H

DYNAMICS OF CHANGE—ISSUES ASSEMBLY

Issues from Assembly

House Meeting Group #1

Passion/Energy for Change in the Church:

1. Tea parties on Sundays
2. Fundraiser to support the tea
3. Fellowship

Passion/Energy for Change in the Community:

1. College students to work with youth
2. Parents and student activities

House Meeting Group #2

Passion/Energy for Change in the Church:

1. The church budget
2. Youth and parents input
3. Fundraiser for youth activities

Passion/ Energy for Change in the Community:

1. Programs on gun control
2. Controlling violence
3. Church involvement in schools

House Meeting #3

Passion/Energy to Change in the Church:

1. Youth activities
2. Activities for the seniors
3. Operational budget for the church

Passion/Energy to Change in the Community:

1. Local singing opportunities

2. Hispanic ministries

House Meeting #4

Passion/Energy to change in Church:

1. Evangelism
2. Pay mortgage
3. Second worship service for younger generation

Passion /Energy to change in Community:

1. Community events
2. No response
3. No response

House Meeting #5

Passion/Energy to change in the church:

1. Family involvement
2. Youth programs
3. Improved hospitality group

Passion/Energy to Change in the Community:

1. Community efforts
2. Hispanic community
3. Prayer services on Friday evenings

House Meeting #6

Passion/Energy to Change in the Church:

1. Improve the sitting
2. More youth ushers
3. Need younger deacons

House Meeting #7

Passion/Energy to Change in the Church:

1. Youth
2. Improve the sanctuary
3. Time to the children and seniors

Passion/Energy to change in the Community:

No change

House Meeting # 8

Passion/Energy to Change in the Church:

1. Youth development
2. Improve the front stairs of the building
3. Seniors

Passion/Energy to change in Community:

No response

House Meeting #9

Passion/Energy to change in the church:

1. Emphases/encourage prayer services
2. Revisit fellowship greeting during worship
   a. eliminate
   b. move it to the end
   c. Monthly fellowship after morning worship
3. Increase church membership
4. Keep the Church doors open throughout the day (minister, deacon available)

Passion/Energy to change in the Community:

1. Food pantry
2. Massachusetts Scholarship Testing program
3. Health screenings
4. Relationship meetings

APPENDIX I

LETTER OF PERMISSION

October 18, 2004

To: Participant and Contextual Associates

From: Johnny M. Wilson, Jr.

Subject: Permission and Release Form

This form is provide for those persons that have agreed to participate in my Dissertation project the enclosed form is for an interview process that is Part of my dissertation work. Please sign your name in acceptance of this Agreement. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated and in support of my final Project for the doctor of ministry at United Theological Seminary, at Dayton, Ohio.

Sincerely,

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